

JANUARY 1914

PRICE 15 CENTS

THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE



Meredith Nicholson's
greatest story complete in this issue



"SIC'UM, TIGE"

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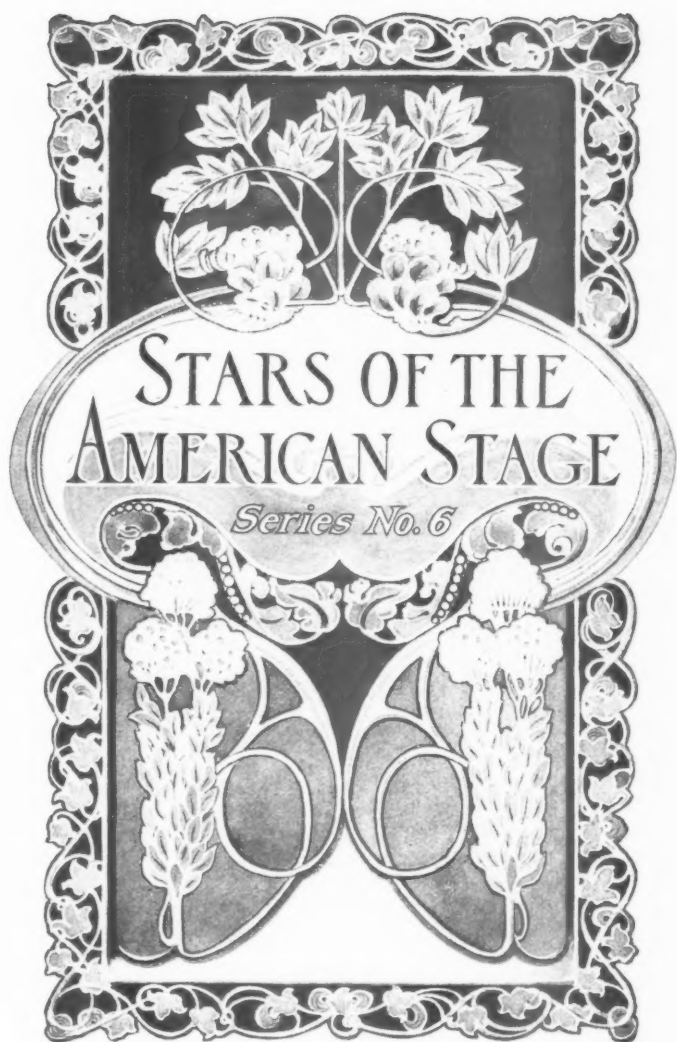
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MAUDE FEALY

Born in Memphis, Tenn., March, 4, 1883.
Made her first appearance on the stage at
the age of three in "Faust," played childrens' parts
for several years. Made her first New York appear-
ance as *Eunice* in "Quo Vadis." Was leading lady
for William Gillette in "Sherlock Holmes" and later
became leading lady for E. S. Willard. Became a
star in 1903 in "Hearts Courageous." Created the
role of Mrs. Began in "The Boss."

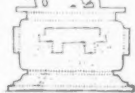
Photograph by Otto Sarony Co., New York



MOLLY McINTYRE

Born 1892, Inverness-Shire, Scotland. First engagement Daly's Theatre, London, 1909. Had mind made up to go on the stage at age of five. Came to America in 1911 to play *Buntz* in "Buntz Pulls The Strings." Is now rehearsing in William Elliott's new play called "Kitty McKay."

Photograph by Strauss-Peyton, Kansas City





CONSTANCE COLLIER

Born at Windsor, England, January 22, 1876. Married Julian L. Estrange. First appeared as *Cicely* in the "Silver King" with Wilson Barrett's company. In 1911 played *Thais* in the play of that name, returning to England in the June of that year to play *Delight* in "The Vision of Delight" at His Majesty's. The fall of that year she returned to America en tour in "Thais," and lately played *Nancy*, in "Oliver Twist."

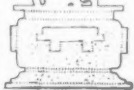
Photograph by Niffett Studio, Chicago



GERTRUDE ELLIOTT

Sister of Maxine Elliott and wife of Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson. Born in Rockland, Maine, and made her first appearance on the stage in 1894 with Rose Coghlan. For a time she was with Nat Goodwin, and then after several important roles in New York went to London in 1899. In September 1900 she became leading woman for Forbes-Robertson and was married to him in April 1901. She and her husband are now playing in the United States.

Photograph by Otto Sarony Co., New York





MINNIE DUPREE

Born in San Francisco, January 19, 1873.
Made her first appearance on the stage in
1887 in "The Unknown." After several engage-
ments in New York she played with Richard Mans-
field and later with Nat Goodwin. In 1900 she ap-
peared with great success as *Clara Hunter* in "The
Climax." Since then she has been successful in
"The Road to Yesterday" and several other plays.

Photograph by James & Bushnell, Seattle



IRENE FENWICK

Born, Chicago, September 5, 1887. Attended Notre Dame, and Waterman Hall, Sycamore, Ill. First theatrical appearance in 1904 in "Peggy From Paris." Next engagement with Louis Mann. Retired from the stage for five years. Returned, with Lulu Glaser, in "Just One of the Boys," then went under management of Frohman, appearing in "The Brass Bottle," "Hawthorne of the U. S. A." and other plays. Now in "The Family Cupboard." in the role of *Kitty May*.

Photograph by White, New York



MARGARET WYCHERLY

Born in London, October 16, 1881. Is the wife of Bayard Veiller, the playwright. Made her first appearance on the stage in 1888 with Mme. Janaushek, in "What Dreams May Come." Played for a time with Richard Mansfield and scored her biggest success when she alternated with Edith Wynne Mattheson in the title role in "Everyman." She has starred in "The Nazarene" and in "The Primrose Path," and has played in support of Arnold Daly in "Candida" and "Arms and the Man."

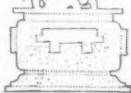
Photograph by Otto Sarony Co., New York



MRS. LESLIE CARTER

Born in Lexington, Kentucky. Made her debut at the Broadway Theatre, New York, November 10, 1890, in "The Ugly Duckling." Her biggest success was scored in "The Heart of Maryland." Later she played *Zaza* and *Du Barry*, and had several years' success under the management of David Belasco; left Mr. Belasco in 1906 on her marriage to W. L. Payne, and since then has appeared principally under her own management.

Photograph by White, New York





KATHERINE EMMETT

Born in San Francisco, Cal. Went to Leland Stanford University. First engagement with Blanche Bates in "The Darling of the Gods," in January, 1904. An engagement with Margaret Anglin in "The Eternal Feminine," followed. Went abroad in February, 1905, to study music for two years. In 1907 went into stock. Some time later, appeared with Guy Bates Post in "The Bridge." Last year was in "Anatol" at The Little Theatre, followed by the "Ghost Breaker."



JANET DUNBAR

Born in Kansas City, Mo., August 6, 1888. Graduated from high school there and went to Dillenbeck School of Oratory. Thence went to American Academy of Dramatic Art. Started her stage career in Augustus Thomas' "Witching Hour," followed by two seasons in Larry Giffen's Stock Company at Richmond, Va. Following this she came to New York in a sketch and was taken by Belasco "because she didn't look like an actress." Has been with Belasco ever since. Is now in the revival of "The Auctioneer."

Photograph by Strauss-Peyton, Kansas City



ADELAIDE THURSTON

Miss Thurston first came into theatrical prominence when, while still a very young girl, she was chosen to follow Maude Adams as *Lady Babbie* in "The Little Minister." Her more notable appearances since then have been in "Sweet Clover," "At Cozy Corners," "The Girl Out Yonder," "Contrary Mary," "Polly Primrose," "The Triumph of Betty," "Woman's Hour," and "Miss Annanias."

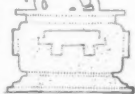
Photograph by White, New York



ADELAIDE KEIM

Born in New York, February 15, 1880. Began her professional career at The Lyceum Theatre as general understudy in Daniel Frohman's companies in 1898. From 1901 to 1903 she played the lead with The Fifth Avenue Theatre Stock Company. She has been considered by some critics one of the most successful *Hamlets* of this generation.

Photograph by Morrison, Chicago





She closed her eyes and I was struck by her pallor. "You can stop this divorce?" I said. "But how, Mary?"

—From the final installment of H. G. Wells' powerful novel, *"The Passionate Friends,"* page 576.

January
1914

THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XXII
No. 3

RAY LONG, Editor



WHILE the Red Book has been perfecting its All-Star staff of writers—a staff which makes possible the offering in this one issue of the work of Meredith Nicholson, Rupert Hughes, H. G. Wells, George Bronson-Howard, George Randolph Chester, Kennett Harris and H. de Vere Stacpoole—it has been constantly on the watch for new writers, the Stars of to-morrow.

Walter Jones, now one of the most popular story tellers in the United States, is not only a Red Book "discovery," but never writes for any other magazine.

Ida M. Evans, "discovered" by us a year ago, and a month-to-month contributor ever since, is now one of the most sought after of writers.

So also with the talented Englishman, L. J. Beeston.

Now we enter in the list of "comers" Katharine Hill, John Barnett (another Englishman,) and Clinton York. All three are represented in this issue.

Miss Hill's story is unique in this day for its powerful presentation of a big, human situation.

Mr. Barnett, in "The Man Hunt," selects South Africa as the scene for a powerful and brilliantly told drama of adventure.

Mr. York's first story appeared in the November number. It, like "Our Baby's Bath," in this issue, dealt with the most important factor in life: a baby. If you read "Helen's Babies," you'll look forward to the stories of Jane II which are to follow these two.

There isn't any magazine anywhere like the Red Book. And you may trust us to maintain the pace we are setting.

That Affair

by MEREDITH
NICHOLSON

Author of "The House of a Thousand Candles," "Otherwise Phyllis," "The Girl With The Red Feather," etc.



I'M almost sorry I didn't go with my wife to visit her Maine relations," remarked Webster G. Burgess to his friend, Captain Tom Hill, the secret service veteran, as they sat dangling their heels over the wall of old Fort Mackinac.

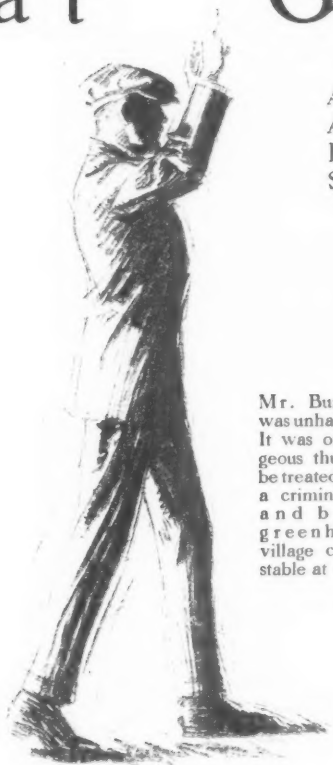
Hill threw the stump of his cigar at the statue of Father Marquette in the park below, looked toward the west, where three long ore barges were crawling like caterpillars into the Straits out of Lake Michigan, and grunted non-committally. It was a little after seven o'clock, and they had risen early that they might stretch their legs on the Island before the *Henriette* resumed its leisurely journey toward Chicago.

"When you asked me to go with you up to Marquette to look for that counterfeiter who had turkey-trotted you all over Indiana, I thought there would be some fun in it, but we've chased all over the Northern Peninsula of this God-forsaken commonwealth with less entertainment than I've found in a Sunday-school picnic. We've ridden on slow trains, and on boats that ought to be condemned, and eaten food that would insult the stomach of a brass-lined ostrich, and here we are, sitting like two school girls watching the ships go by. I'll not say that I'm disappointed in you, Tom, but the trip hasn't got us anywhere. If I'd known this was

the best you could do to amuse me, I wouldn't have lied to my wife about having to come up here to collect a bad loan. When a man of my social position lies, Tom, he's entitled to a return on the investment."

"There may be something in that," remarked the detective musingly. "When I took you with me on that raid in southern Indiana to pinch the Tully gang and you came as near being killed as a man can without making a mess for the undertaker, I lied to your wife like a true sport. I had to tell her that we met by chance on the train coming back and that you had been to Cincinnati to a college fraternity dinner, just as you had lied to her was the case. And now you're peevish because I missed my man

a t Green Bay



Mr. Burgess was unhappy. It was outrageous thus to be treated like a criminal — and by a greenhorn village constable at that.

AN ADVENTURE OF A GIRL IN
A GREEN SWEATER, A BLASÉ
BANKER AND A PHILOSOPHIC
SECRET SERVICE MAN.

Illustrated by
George Brehm

in the Northern Peninsula of Michigan, and complain because nobody shot you!"

"It's not my fault," said Webster G. Burgess, president of the White River National Bank and of divers and sundry other institutions, educational and philanthropic as well as commercial; "it's not my fault that I was born so respectable. If I had lived in the good old times I could have put on a suit of armor and jumped on a large, cavorting horse and carved up people and rescued beautiful maidens from ivy-mantled towers and had no end of a good time. But it's the having to put on a white waistcoat every few nights and speak at banquets or listen to even sillier speeches by other fellows—the humdrum of life I lead that makes me break loose occasionally."

"When I go into the bank sometimes," remarked the detective in the same key, "and see you sitting there like an iceberg, and strong men coming in with their hats in their hands and kowtowing, and know that you've been hiding some old crook in your garage all night or taking some outlaw on a joyride out of town, all covered up with your respectability, I'm almost tickled to death. And once or twice when you think you've played one on me, I've forgiven you because I know that stuffed image that sits in your bank rolling up dividends isn't really you, but that the real Webster G. is a kid about fourteen years old who'll never grow up. And because I'm older than you and not as spry as I was, owing to the lead some of your underdogs have pumped into me at various seasons, times and places, it's my duty to keep you out of trouble if I can. Besides, I promised Mrs. Webster G. that I would."

"That was nice of you," said the banker with gentle irony. "And having delivered your sermon, it's up to us to decide whether we're going to take the train for Detroit to-night, or go back to the Green Bay boat, which sails at nine."

"Mine for the *Henriette*," said the detective, "for the excellent reason that it goes earlier. It's lonesome on an island; I shouldn't choose islands as a steady diet."

"The captain doesn't know when he'll land us in Chicago," said Burgess.

"That girl that you made me eat dinner with on the ship last night said it

might be years and it might be never. If we go back to the *Henriette* I suppose I'll continue to take my meals with that girl. Maybe I'd better go down in the cellar of the ship and eat with the boys that throw in the coal."

"She's a perfectly proper person," replied Burgess with some asperity, "and it didn't seem right for two married men like us, with children of our own, to let an unprotected girl eat alone."

"She's going down to Oshomowoc or some of the other queer 'omowocs or 'koshes they have in the Badger State, to teach school. That's what you said. She has two very stylish suit-cases, and her clothes weren't made by a village dressmaker. And she wears a watch on her wrist that cost more than two dollars. That don't chime with the two little orphan brothers—excuse me, sisters; and she came on board at Kiskaden last night with considerable haste. I merely suggest these points. She's a pretty girl, all right, and her green sweater is becoming. Of course she's a nice girl, or you wouldn't have talked to her so long last night while I was smoking myself to death on the other side of the ark."

"I was telling her about you—what a keen scout you are and how you've filled Leavenworth prison with your victims."

"Good news," replied Hill easily. "Before we reach port she'll probably want my autograph for her collection. I forgot that girl was going further. I guess we'd better shake the boat and get the train for Detroit. I'm not in the banking business, and this isn't exactly a vacation for me."

"Now that you're sore on the trip I don't mind telling you that if we hadn't stopped in Chicago so you could meet the first oysters hastening toward Omaha and Emporia with autumn greetings of typhoid and ptomaine, I'd have got to Marquette in time to pinch my man, and wouldn't have made a humiliating fluke. You needn't think because my average balance in your bank is only fifty-two dollars you can abuse me after you've invited yourself to join me on a party, and have shown me off at a Chicago club where I made an ass of myself telling all my old yarns to your friends."

"That yacht just anchoring," interrupted Burgess, "is the *Esprit* and belongs to Dick Walters, of Chicago, and if you don't cheer up I'll take you aboard and make you tell your stories again. All but this Michigan case, where you've done much to shake my faith in your powers. We'd better stretch our legs further and get back to the dock."

"You speak of this trip as though I'd been wasting time," remarked the detective, jumping down from the wall and brushing the whitewash from his trousers. "And just because you've been so nasty I'll bet you a twenty-dollar gold-piece that inside of three days I'll have the man I'm looking for tied up in jail."

"I take the bet, only you're entitled to odds; we'll call it a thousand to twenty."

"That makes it more interesting, but I sha'n't work any harder for a thousand. It's my money."

They left the fort and strolled down into the village in the best of humor.

Burgess had spoken sincerely when he declared his impatience of the tame life into which he was born. He was a keen and successful banker, but at least once every three months his desk grew irksome and he vanished—to fish or hunt or climb a mountain. He had participated with Hill in several captures without getting himself into the newspapers, but he declared to the detective that his sympathies were with the men on the other side of the barricade. He was a member of a society whose function it is to maintain agents at the doors of penitentiaries with a kind word and a helping hand for discharged convicts; and it was quite true that he had once palmed off on his wife a clever yeggman who had appealed to him for protection. This cheerful rogue had sat up at Mrs. Burgess' table in a dress suit and acquitted himself creditably, quite unawed by the presence of the governor of Indiana and the rector of St. James' Church.

Burgess hurried down to the dock to get into communication with the Chicago yachtsman; and Hill, remarking that he needed a tooth-brush, visited a drugstore, made his purchase, and then strolled into the telegraph office.

As he entered he paused an instant, and

his head moved quickly to one side. This was a way of Hill's when something interested him and it had once saved his life from a bullet fired from ambush on a raid in the Ozarks.

At the counter stood the girl in the green sweater, of whom he had been speaking to Burgess. As the detective entered she was just filing a message. The clerk began mumbling it over for verification, and Hill, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the lithograph of a lake steamer on the wall, stood with his back to her. He caught a few phrases:

"Mrs. John P. Wilkerson, the New Dearborn, Chicago... Sure I am on right track... Do not trouble about me... Not coming home until Father is safe..."

She paid for the message, turned round abruptly and as her eyes fell upon Hill she smiled pleasantly.

"Good morning!" they said in unison.

"About time to go back to the boat, isn't it?" she asked.

"Just ten minutes. There goes the bell now," Hill replied.

"You and your friend are completing the trip, I suppose?" she asked indifferently.

"We are unless my friend gets lost," said the detective. "He's gone calling on a yacht that's just anchored and you never can tell about him."

"Oh," said the girl. "He's very amusing."

"That's his business," said Hill, lifting his hat; "we'll meet again later."

He feigned to be looking for something in his pockets until the door closed upon her and then inquired for messages, giving his name as George Roberts.

He receipted for a message the clerk threw out to him and chewed a cigar as he read:

Escanaba, Wis., Sept. 4, 1913.
George Roberts.

Mackinac Island, Mich.
Your chicken hatched at Escanaba;
easy going. Keep afloat and poultry
will meet you at Oriano.

BRIGGS.

Hill read the telegram twice. What passed into his consciousness was a translation of it as follows:

Party arrested without trouble.
Stay on boat and examine him
when you reach Oriano.

"Briggs" was Sanborn, a private detective Hill employed occasionally to assist him in cases of special importance.

These tidings seemed to be satisfactory to the detective. He tore the telegram into tiny pieces and then went down to the dock, where he immediately caught sight of Burgess hanging over the rail of the *Henriette*, talking to the girl in the green sweater.

The girl walked away as Hill appeared, and the detective engaged Burgess in bantering talk while the ship backed slowly from the dock. The young woman walked to the stern and Hill's eyes followed her guardedly. She stood quite alone and as the *Henriette* swung close to the yacht she suddenly clenched her hands and tossed her head disdainfully, as though the sight of the *Esprit* had aroused her animosity. Hill's eyes saw without seeming to see.

Hill shared the faith of many of the successful men in his profession that there is a certain element of luck in crook-hunting. When Burgess raised the question of their continuing with the *Henriette* or taking the train for Detroit he had not cared one way or the other; and now his telegram had given him information that made the cruise toward Green Bay wholly desirable. And his meeting with the girl in the telegraph office had been one of those happy coincidences that keep the detective sense alert. With his usual caution he had told the banker nothing of his real errand to the Northern Peninsula, but had let him think that it was in pursuit of a counterfeiter who had been circulating "raised" bills in Indiana, and who was being sought by the regularly-assigned secret service men in Michigan. It is known to few that Hill, while ostensibly a secret service agent with headquarters at the Hoosier capital, has for years been drawn upon by various branches of the government to perform the most difficult tasks outside his own special field. And now and then he had received permission to accept a private commission that called for wise and delicate handling.

"It was queer about that yacht," said Burgess to Hill as they took a turn about the deck. "I got a boy to row me out, thinking sure it was the Walters boat all right; but a mere deck swabber bawled down to me that visitors weren't allowed and when I talked back to him he said they'd merely stopped to get in touch with the telegraph office and meant to sail again immediately. I didn't see Walters at all."

"What's his line?" asked Hill indifferently.

"Yachts, largely. No end of money. Richest young man in Chicago. Inherited about half the Inner-Sea National Bank among other things."

"So? That's the bank Featherby's president of, isn't it?"

"The same, but he's only Walters' hired man—though Walters never shows up at the bank."

"Well, well," said Hill, yawning.

"Why this *welling*?" asked the banker, frowning.

"Oh, nothing! One of the Featherby girls married a Wilkerson, didn't she?" he asked, stretching himself.

"Yes. They're quite in the Chicago push. What do you know about them?"

"Nothing," said the detective. "This is Tuesday and I always test my memory on Tuesdays. It's a habit."

"Well, you needn't worry about the Featherbys. They're not likely to need your services."

"All right," remarked Hill. "I'm sorry I spoke. I see my error now. There comes the charmer in her green sweater and I think I'll go below and take a nap. I was so worried over your flirtation with that girl that I couldn't sleep last night."

There was a considerable sea on and only a few passengers remained on deck. Burgess found the girl in the green sweater comfortably established for the morning with a book.

"You have the faith of a good sailor in your own powers of resistance," he remarked as she nodded toward a chair. "These lakes lash themselves into a fury without much provocation, and it's growing rougher."

"If that were all my troubles," said the girl, "I should climb on the back of

one of those gulls and ride all day."

"Trouble?" remarked Burgess sympathetically. "I shouldn't pick you out as one of the daughters of sorrow. But trouble can't follow you on this boat unless it pursues you by wireless, which would be extremely bad manners on its part."

"Mine, unfortunately, travels with me," she replied gravely.

Burgess' curiosity was piqued by her manner. He had manufactured the story he told Hill about the widowed mother and the school teaching, and he had not overlooked the suit-cases which had accompanied her aboard at Kiskaden, to which Hill had referred. She was not only a pretty girl, in her early twenties, but she had an air about her as of one who had seen much of the world. She wore a long gray traveling coat, and a simple gray hat, and tan pumps and gloves. Her eyes were the brownest imaginable, and they were very appealing when she yielded herself to reverie. It was not in a purely philanthropic spirit that he lingered. He liked to be amused and there had not only been a little sincerity in his complaint that Hill had failed to keep him interested on the trip, but he had attached himself to the detective for the journey to the northern peninsula uninvited. If the results had been unsatisfactory it was not wholly Hill's fault. Hill was on his eternal quest for somebody, and in his own time and in his own way that somebody would be apprehended. Nothing so touched the banker's admiration as the detective's calm acceptance of his temporary defeats—and his defeats were always temporary. Hill always won out in the end.

The girl was agreeable, responsive. He told her stories to see her smile—and once during the first hour she laughed out merrily. He assured himself that he was performing a kind office in amusing her and taking her mind off her troubles. The *Henricette*, a veteran of the lakes, engaged in long cruises from Chicago to Duluth with stops at Green Bay ports, was not the best of boats and he wondered what had impelled her to make this journey; but she allowed him to do most of the talking and her own occa-

The girl was agreeable, responsive. He told her stories to see her smile—and once during the first hour she laughed out merrily



sional remarks were decidedly impersonal.

Burgess found himself recurring to Hill and his exploits. The girl seemed to have brought the conversation back to this channel. She said that she liked detective stories and Burgess recounted a number of his own adventures with Hill and also related one or two incidents of his independent experiences with criminals.

"I like to put one over on Hill occasionally. Like all man-hunters he has no patience with the modern ideas in criminology. With Hill, once a crook always a crook. And I don't believe that, Miss——"

"Foster," said the girl, with her charming smile.

"Pardon me," said Burgess with real annoyance. "I really didn't mean to do that. I was so full of my own talk that I ran plumb into that. Please don't believe it was a trick."

"Of course I shall believe nothing of the kind. I know just how it happened. And there's no earthly reason why I shouldn't tell you my name. You are very kind to talk to me; you help to take me out of myself and I'm grateful for that."

"My name is Burgess," he now volunteered, "and I'm engaged in a form of pawn-broking known as banking. I always apologize for it."

"You will be amused to know that I thought you were some kind of detective, like your friend. You really look more like one than he does. I should have taken him for a man in a ticket-office—the person who smiles and says how sorry he is there are no more lower berths."

Burgess chuckled.

"You know," he went on, feeling that a complete sympathy was established between them, "my interests are quite on the other side of the game. To be frank with you, I'd a good deal rather help poor devils to escape the law than land them behind the bars. Just between ourselves, I've once or twice been able to checkmate Hill in really ticklish cases when I was afraid afterward to let him know that I'd been operating on the other side of the chess-board. But in the

end he always wins. He has amazing luck."

"I envy you the fun you must have," remarked the girl, and Burgess was aware of a flash of admiration in her eyes. "Our lives are all so humdrum."

"I've resolved not to let mine be! This will be a drab world when all the adventure goes out of it."

"That is so," Miss Foster assented, "but my first adventure—a truly thrilling thrill—is still ahead of me. Nothing more tragic has ever happened to me than to miss a train or lose a tennis game. I rather resent it."

She disappeared at twelve o'clock and Burgess sought Hill in his state-room and awakened him to charge him with being sea-sick.

"I was just dreaming that I had caught you running a phony money factory in the cellar of your bank," said Hill, rubbing his eyes, "and I was locking you up in the safety vault to wait for the patrol wagon. That girl must have jumped overboard or you wouldn't be down here annoying me."

"I have ordered luncheon for three—bribed the steward not to give us the regular victuals. So brush your hair and begin to look intelligent. Her name is Foster. That was all fake, what I told you about the school teaching and the widowed mother."

"Of course I always believe everything you tell me," said Hill, hauling out his suit-case to get his brushes. He turned up a pair of handcuffs and tossed them to Burgess, who shrugged his shoulders and flung them back.

"I lose a thousand if you use these on this trip. You'd better carry flypaper hereafter; you're not as keen as you used to be, old man; and I'm sorry to see you losing out."

"That girl," said Hill, stooping slightly to view himself in the mirror, "has gone to your head. I have already spent that thousand. I'm going to take a trip abroad with it to visit Scotland Yard, and I mean to have a look at those French detectives they write the fairy stories about. As for eating, I'd just as lief eat alone if I'm likely to be in your way. When a man's wife is vis-

iting in Bangor, and he's traveling on the Great Lakes, jollyng all the girls he meets—"

"Just for that," said Burgess, opening the state-room door with a bang, "I refuse to buy you a cocktail."

II

The luncheon party of three was a cheerful one. As the rough weather continued and most of the passengers kept out of sight, they had the little dining saloon practically to themselves. It was disclosed that Miss Foster lived in Chicago, and she grew eloquent in her praise of the Great Lakes. She thought they were not appreciated in America. She expressed the opinion that if they were situated in England, Americans would be constantly crossing the Atlantic to see them. While she compared notes of foreign travel with Burgess, the detective scrutinized her at leisure. She was beyond doubt a very attractive target for the eye. Her color had been freshened by the wind, and her cheeks glowed. Her brown hair, revealed more perfectly now that she had unwound the veil from her hat, glinted goldenly. She spoke with a crisp precision, as of one used to exercising a certain authority. Her hands were brown from the summer suns; they were strong, shapely, competent hands, and they interested Hill professionally.

It was on the banker's mind that the presence of a girl like Miss Foster on an inferior lake craft, without apparent interest in her destination, required explanation. She seemed out of place on the *Henriette*; and nothing was clarified by the fact that she had boarded the lounging old vessel at Kiskaden, a lumber outpost, where she had apparently walked in out of the woods.

"I suppose," she was saying, with her eyes bent upon Hill, "that you two gentlemen with your wholly different attitude toward the criminal world are bound to clash, sometimes: one of you interested in getting unfortunates out of trouble, the other in pushing them further in. It has always seemed to me that while man-hunting would be interesting as an occupation, there would be times

when the most hard-hearted detective would have a qualm."

There was direct inquiry here; Hill was for a moment uncomfortable and sought her eyes, which at the instant fell carelessly upon a spray-and-rain-splashed port-hole. He rallied instantly and answered with some feeling.

"You are quite right, Miss Foster. And the older I get the more difficult it is to do my work. And a good many fellows are allowed to get by—more than we ever get credit for. But—it's always worth considering that people ought to be good! It's one thing to stumble over a chair in the dark, and quite something else to fall clear down-stairs in broad daylight. I suppose we all agree on that. Even my friend Burgess," he said, and her eyes met his now quite frankly, "even he would pipe another tune if somebody should lift a bunch of money out of his bank."

Her eyes shut quickly, and she played nervously with a bread-crumble; but she smiled instantly.

"Oh, it always comes down to the personal equation, of course—a mere matter of whose horse has been stolen."

Her voice faltered for an instant, almost imperceptibly, but both men had noticed it. It was inconceivable that she had ever had the remotest connection with a criminal; her slight display of feeling must be attributable to a sympathetic nature and kindly feeling for all who are in trouble. Hill changed the subject abruptly. He had asked the captain how much the storm was delaying the *Henriette*, and announced that they would reach Oriano at least two hours late. Miss Foster manifested interest in this.

"That is too bad: I shall leave the boat at Oriano. I imagine that it's a lonesome place to land at night. Some friends of mine have a summer home near there, but as there's no telegraph office, I couldn't wire them when I started. But"—and she laughed composedly—"I'm used to traveling alone and it's rather interesting than otherwise to reach a strange port in the dark and meet new situations."

"That," said Burgess in his largest

manner, "is the high privilege of the American girl anywhere in the world. Trust the American girl to jump off a boat, suit-case in hand, anywhere on earth, and meet any emergency. To the American girl," he added, lifting an imaginary glass, "the queen of the world!"

"And the American man," she responded immediately, imitating the gesture, "always on hand to render service and strew flowers in her path."

"Thank you for the hint! If there's a florist at Oriano the flowers shall not be lacking."

She went away to her room after luncheon, and Hill and Burgess went below and sat in a poker game most of the afternoon and then went up on deck to take the air.

"You can't doubt," said the banker, "that she's a nice girl. I hope you're satisfied that she isn't the sort that flirts with strange married men she meets on ships."

"She is not, emphatically not," replied the detective.

"She's a young woman who has seen the world and knows how to deal with it. She knew, for example, that we were all right, that she could talk to us and have luncheon with us without in any way violating the proprieties. I hope you're satisfied."

"You sound like a man with a nervous conscience; but you needn't worry. Your wife, now visiting her relations in the remote state of Maine, shall hear nothing from me. But there's another girl sitting over there as lonesome as an honest alderman in a bunch of crooks. I'll bet she's just as proper as Miss Foster, though her clothes are a job lot and she wears high shoes, and doesn't look as though she sat round the fire on winter evenings burning money. You might have spent money for a special luncheon for her, but you didn't; but I'm not complaining, you understand, I liked your food."

"You can buy me a good dinner when you win that thousand," said Burgess. The boat rolled as her course changed slightly, and the two men were flung against the rail.

"I'll consider that," remarked the detective when he had got his sea legs again. "And instead of three days we'll make it two."

Burgess glanced at him suspiciously.

"Have you been working the wireless? That would be taking an unfair advantage."

"It would," said the detective with his equivocal grin. "That's why I slept all morning, to avoid the temptation to rake the coasts for information, which wouldn't have been playing the game straight. I've got my information for less money. All we need in our business is a good pair of eyes."

"You don't mean," gasped Burgess, "that your man's on board—locked in his room?"

"Lord no! Men you are looking for don't just naturally get on boats and trains and sit in your lap. Even in the rotten detective stories you're always soaking into your system they don't do that."

"If I could have got hold of Walters at Mackinac I'd have made him lend us his yacht to chase your man in. There would have been something grandly sporty in that."

"But then you wouldn't have had Miss Foster to amuse you all day. You could hardly have asked her on board your friend's yacht. It wouldn't have looked well; and besides, she wouldn't have gone."

"Of course not," said Burgess with asperity. "And I wish you wouldn't think up queer things like that just to be disagreeable."

"That high land over there," remarked Hill, "is Washington Island. We were due to touch there just two hours and thirty minutes ago, and I figure that at this rate we sha'n't reach Oriano until eight o'clock. Which means that you'd better stake the cook again and arrange another banquet. By the way," he added indifferently, "do we get off at Oriano or keep on to Chicago? Miss Foster, of course, gets off there."

"Don't be an ass. Hill. We get off at Oriano for the reason that the boat is shaky and we don't want to risk another night on her."

"That," said Hill, "is a perfectly good reason, and hasn't anything to do with the girl's dropping off here or your wife being absent among the Yankees."

A cold rain was falling when the *Henriette* discharged her passengers. The best inn, Burgess had learned from the purser, was the Larkspur, a small summer hotel; but he found on inquiry at the dock that it was closed, and they followed a boy with their bags to the Longview, which was perched on an elevation at the edge of town. The place was run by a woman who welcomed them in some surprise and with apparent reluctance, as her last boarder was taking the *Henriette*, which was on its last cruise, and she evidently expected no more guests that season. She explained that the work of closing her house had already begun, but that she would be able to care for them for the night—which Burgess replied was all that they required.

"There are only two guests here," added their hostess, "two gentlemen; they got in only an hour ago, and I shouldn't have taken them if one hadn't been tired out and sick."

Miss Foster, permitting Burgess to conduct the negotiations, scanned the register that lay open on the desk. Hill also ran his eye down the page. Two names in the same hand were inscribed:

J. B. Cummings, Minneapolis.

B. K. Briggs, Minneapolis.

Miss Foster added her name and Burgess registered for himself and the detective. The names of the earlier arrivals were bracketed and "18" was penciled on the margin, indicating that the two men from Minneapolis were lodged in one room. The woman gave each of the trio a candle and led the way upstairs.

"I suppose," remarked Burgess, "that the closer we stick to the inn the less chance we take of stepping off into the lake."

"It was your choice," remarked Hill carelessly.

The proprietress seemed slightly churlish at being obliged to care for the unexpected arrivals. She told the men to help themselves to the rooms whose num-

bers she gave them, and as they passed on they heard her addressing herself more amiably to the girl.

Miss Foster's room was 19, and Burgess and Hill drew 30 and 31 at the farther end of the hall.

"I'm going to get into some dry clothes," said Burgess, "and I'll be ready for trouble in twenty minutes."

Hill entered 31, leaving the door slightly ajar, and became at once a man of action. Through the unplastered partition he could hear Burgess moving about; and down the hall, faintly lighted with an oil lamp, the landlady was bidding Miss Foster good-night. It was nine o'clock and presumably guests were not expected to reappear or to make any further demands upon the house's resources.

When the woman's steps died away Hill stole to the door of room 18 and tapped lightly twice, waited an instant, then repeated the taps. This done, he moved noiselessly to the head of the stairway that led down into the office, which was also the sitting room for guests. In a moment a man opened the door and stuck his head out guardedly, saw Hill, and waved his hand. In response to a gesture indicating the stairway the man softly closed and locked the door, and crept after the detective to the square hall below. An oil lamp burned over the counter where business was transacted with guests. Hill had unlocked the front door and when the stranger appeared he led him out upon the veranda. The rain fell monotonously and the waves beat angrily on the shore below. The regular dock lights were visible on the one hand and the far-scattered street lamps of the town burned mistily on the other.

"Well, Sanborn, you pinched him?"

"Yep. Had a long, queer chase. Hard enough nailing the sane ones, but when they go looney you've got to have bugs yourself to do any business."

"The question is, is he bughouse or just playing up?"

"Well, if it's a game he's playing he's got me fooled. After I left you in Marquette I made another guess, dropped over into Wisconsin and ran into him



the next day driving in a horse and wagon for the Canadian line—all alone, just plugging along. Seemed to have an idea

that he was going to drive right across Lake Superior into the promised land. Obeyed orders about making no fuss; I hired a tug at Escanaba to bring me down here, expecting to catch the *Henriette* for Chicago, and wired you I'd wait for you here."

"Good work. The *Henriette's* gone, but I wasn't ready to go anyhow. This isn't an ordinary case; I don't deliver him in Chicago without instructions. How about the goods?"

"Safe; too much of it for comfort. Lord! he's got all kinds of stuff in his bag. The damned thing's under the bed up there now. You know the dope was that he's a drug fiend. I sounded him on that, and he didn't lie about it. Said he'd lost his machine—what do you call it?"

"Hypodermic?"

"That's right. Got him one at the drug store; said he hadn't slept without it for two years and I let him buy his own medicine."

Hill shrugged his shoulders.

"What if he's crossed out of our jurisdiction—clean over?"

"Oh, no danger with *him*. He's terrible dignified and humble, but resigned. Hasn't talked any, but says it's all a mistake, just as they always do. I've

treated him like a gentleman as you told me to."

"Well, if you're sure he's the boy, it's all right, providing you haven't poisoned him. This is a private job, you know. I'm putting in my vacation on it. His brother directors want to handle it on the mum and don't want the comptroller's office to get on."

"I felt like shooting some of the juice into the bag to make the boodle sleep too. I want to get rid of it. I'll just turn it over to you right now."

"No you don't!" replied Hill. "I'm traveling with a friend who isn't wise to the game, and I don't want him to suspect anything. I've got to get into touch with Chicago and find out the next move."

"They'll want to plant him in Leavenworth," said Sanborn. "They always do—the fellows he's chummed with and sipped cocktails with in his clubs."

"His daughter is here—right here in this house. Came on the boat with us. She's been looking for the old man, which complicates matters for to-morrow. She's a nice girl and I don't want to make any fuss to-night on her account. I'll lock myself with the long-distance before the town goes to sleep and talk to Chicago."

"Your best chance is the exchange down Main street two blocks, over the drug store. It shuts up at twelve o'clock. Or I'll do the 'phoning for you."

"I'll have to do it myself. Sure the old man's asleep?"

"Dead to the world! I poked enough dope into him to make a horse sleep."

Sanborn said he wanted to smoke, and leaving him established in a rocking-chair in the dimly lighted office, Hill crept back upstairs. The landlady had left a lamp burning on a table midway of the hall and as Hill paused on the last step the flame flickered and somewhere a door closed softly. He was not sure whether the gust of air had been caused by the closing of a door or whether it was merely a draught from an open transom. He listened a moment at 18 and found all quiet: he heard Miss Foster's light step in 19, and reassured that Sanborn's prisoner still slept, he

knocked at Burgess' room. To his surprise he found the banker coolly reading a magazine, by the light of two candles.

"This rain doesn't sound like a good evening for a stroll," said Burgess. "I'm going to turn in as soon as I finish this yarn. I've been studying a time-table and I'm for pulling stakes in the early a. m. and getting back to the asphalt. I just happened to think of the comfortable corners there are in those Chicago clubs, with buttons to press, and it makes me pine for the fleshpots."

"Miss Foster wouldn't be there," said Hill, eyeing him suspiciously; "and you got off the boat so she wouldn't be stranded alone in this damp hole."

"Well, she couldn't get out to her friend's place to-night, and it wouldn't have been decent to leave her here all alone. What are you up to?"

"I'm going to bed," said Hill.

He went out, noiselessly entered his room, and locked his door; then, opening a door that connected with an empty room on the farther side of his own, he drew off his shoes and passed swiftly downstairs, crept past Sanborn, who dozed in his chair, put on his shoes on the veranda and stepped out into the rain. He had brought his mackintosh and drew its collar up round his neck. Choosing a path that led from the

inn to the village, he headed for the red-and-green light of the drug-store.

III

A moment after Hill's departure Miss Foster opened her door and peered into

A slight noise above caused them to lift their eyes to the dark transom behind them. "Never mind the ladder," came in a hoarse whisper. "Take care of the man below and I can open the door."



the hall cautiously. She tiptoed to the rail guard and saw the outer door close softly upon Hill, and marked also Sanborn, quietly asleep. She turned and had retraced her steps half way, when Burgess came out of his room. They met by the little stand where the lamp burned, as though by previous arrangement.

"If you really meant what you said—that you would help me—" she whispered.

"I meant every word of that," he replied earnestly.

"My father is in that room. He is a prisoner. The man who brought him here is sitting in the hall down-stairs; Mr. Hill has been talking to him, but has gone out—probably to telephone or telegraph. If they take Father back to Chicago he is ruined. He is a banker and there has been trouble among his directors and they want to get rid of him: that's all there is to it. He's been harassed by his enemies until he's a nervous wreck. I have been trying to trace him myself but couldn't reach him, and got on the *Henriette* in despair, meaning to go back to Chicago, but when you told me that Mr. Hill was a detective I felt sure he was seeking Father—and the woman who keeps the house told me one of the men in room 18 is ill and that the other man seemed to be watching him carefully. I know—"

"I didn't know it was your father Hill was looking for; I assure you that he led me to think it was a counterfeiter he wanted. I came along just for the fun of it."

"Of course Mr. Hill is a friend of yours—"

Their eyes met in the lamplight, and Burgess smiled.

"We're on different sides of the barricade, as I told you on the boat. If I can help you I'll do it and settle with him later. Your father's name, I assume, isn't—"

"George P. Featherby," said the girl. Burgess started.

"It's impossible that he should have done any wrong! Why, it can't be possible that Dick Walters knows of this—"

"The conspiracy involves him too.

He was abroad all summer and has just got back. I had a right to expect better things of him; but he has allowed those other men to win him over to their side against Father. His yacht was in the harbor at Mackinac. I should have stayed there and appealed to him, but I was afraid of Mr. Hill—that he would find Father and take him down to Chicago. Mr. Hill will soon be back. Father must be got away before he comes!"

There were tears in her lovely eyes, and her hand lay on his sleeve for a moment confidingly. He did not debate with her or with himself.

"There's only the man on guard below. Get your father ready to go and I'll settle that fellow in the office."

She put out her hand. It was a slim, firm, warm hand and Webster G. Burgess' fingers tingled at the contact. The adventure was wholly to his taste. In the unlikeliest circumstances in the world he had found a situation that put him on his mettle. He had been pitted against Hill before, and the detective had always turned the winning card. This time there should be no blunder, no mistake that would demonstrate the detective's superior wit.

While this colloquy was in progress the gentleman in room 18 stood on a chair with his ear to the open transom listening. The voices of Burgess and the girl outside had risen to a murmur, quite audible to the listener.

"There's no doubt of it's being Father. Mr. Hill knocked on the door of that room a moment after you went to your room and one of the men in there went down-stairs with him and I saw them talking together. There's no chance of a mistake. If you could get a ladder—"

A slight noise above caused them to lift their eyes to the dark transom behind them.

"Never mind the ladder," came in a hoarse whisper. "Take care of the man below and I can open the door. There's no time to waste."

Burgess crept to the stairway. Hill had lied about the object of his northern trip and this deepened his resolve to help the girl. And Featherby was a name to

conjure with. The young woman meanwhile waited breathlessly by the door of 18.

Far from being under the influence of a narcotic, Sanborn's prisoner was fully dressed and particularly wide awake. He was a man of fifty, with a day's stubble on his otherwise clean-shaven face. He lighted a candle, tore a rip in the lining of his coat and drew out a slender, flat-handled implement. Picking up Sanborn's suit-case, he sprung the lock, took out a revolver which he eyed critically and slipped into his ulster pocket. He then applied the small flat implement to the door lock with lithe, skilled fingers. There was the slightest scratching, and as the bolt slipped back noiselessly, the girl blew out the lamp. The man stepped out and found himself immediately clasped in her arms.

"Be brave, dear daddy," she whispered, and he felt her tears warm on his face.

"Don't follow me; I'll be all right," he muttered, slipping away from her.

Sanborn, not knowing that he had injected pure water into the arm of his prisoner, yielded himself to slumber in the quiet office. And being asleep he did not know that Webster G. Burgess, a bank president of high repute, crawled down-stairs with the felonious purpose of assaulting him. But this was the thing that Webster G. Burgess did.

An old-fashioned clock on the wall struck ten noisily and caused Sanborn to waken. He yawned and stretched himself and on the instant was caught vigorously from behind and flung to the floor. It is Webster G. Burgess' pride that he keeps himself in condition, and as he was a bigger and heavier man than the detective he held him fast, gripping him tightly by the throat.

Sanborn lay still for a moment taking account of himself; then suddenly he thrust up his knees in such manner as to pitch Burgess forward over his head; and there followed a fast and furious rough-and-tumble struggle. The detective was a wiry and resourceful wrestler, and kept the heavier and stronger man busy. After the first bump of Sanborn's

body on the floor the struggle made little noise. Neither had uttered a word. In the half-lighted room two men who were perfect strangers to each other strove for the mastery. If Burgess' big shoulders hung over his antagonist's for a moment, the smaller man slipped from under him an instant later. It was a very pretty contest which in an athletic club would have set a crowd wild with delight.

And during the three minutes this lasted, the gentleman from Room 18 had viewed it with an amused smile on his face. He watched it first from the guard rail above; then, confident that the two men were sufficiently absorbed in each other, he reached over to the bracket where the single oil lamp burned and thrust in a cigarette, dropping down a step lower with each inhalation, and glancing up to make sure he was not being observed from the rear. The girl lurked somewhere behind him, listening in the black corridor. He seemed to be taking an impersonal, somewhat critical interest in the scene enacting below. A slight creak of the last stair-tread caused Burgess, for a moment on top of the detective, to turn his head. Seeing the tall figure of the fugitive he gasped at him:

"Clear out! Your way's clear; skip!"

It was not so clear, for Sanborn, lying on his back during the moment's distraction, suddenly flung up his body and threw his assailant off. With the spring of a cat he jumped for the door and stood before it swinging a chair.

"You fool," he bawled at Burgess, who had got on his feet and was about to renew the attack. "Hill will be here in a minute! You'll pay for this. You—"

"Beat it through the window. Featherby," shouted Burgess as he rushed upon the detective.

But Mr. Featherby had his own ideas of a proper exit. He caught the chair Sanborn was swinging to fend him off, gave it a jerk that flung the detective far back into the room, and leaped through the door. Burgess lingered an instant to guard his retreat and then rushed after him.

Sanborn was up and after them in one tick of the clock. The rain had sunk

to a dreary drizzle. He settled himself to run, reached the foot of the slope where there was a small private dock, and paused to listen. He heard only the beat of the waves on the shore; the night had swallowed up the men as completely as though they had never existed. He was furiously angry at the trick that had been played upon him. He had caught the most important quarry he had ever sought in a long career; he had put the man to sleep under a narcotic behind a locked door, and while he himself dozed he had been unaccountably attacked by a stranger who had openly connived at the prisoner's escape. He was quite satisfied that there had been no other persons in the hotel but the landlady, his prisoner, Hill's unknown friend, and the girl who was Featherby's daughter beyond doubt, for Hill had said so. The fact that Hill was any man's friend was a sufficient guaranty of his trustworthiness, and he had taken no account of the girl. The celerity of Featherby's movements after he had dropped out of the clouds into the office were beyond his powers of analysis. And Hill was locked up in a telephone booth telling his Chicago employers that Featherby was caught!

"I've got to get my bags," panted the man from Room 18 as he and Burgess landed in a weed patch at the bottom of the hill. "Dropped 'em out of the window. Got to get 'em. That man up there will raise the devil in a minute. You swing back around the hill on the right and pick up the bags and I'll meet you back of the barn. Who's that chap that came here with you?"

"That's Hill," replied Burgess, uncomfortably conscious that he was sitting on a thorny bush of some sort. In helping the charming Miss Featherby's father to escape he had not expected to do more than hold Hill's assistant while the fugitive banker walked through the door. There had now been a row of which he was likely to hear a good deal before long; and moreover he had not got through with Featherby, who seemed perfectly cool, and disposed to avail himself of his further services.

"Chase yourself now and get those

bags," Featherby was saying, quite as though he were directing a servant. He even gave Webster G. Burgess a slight push in the back.

Burgess crawled up the hill again, started across a strip of lawn and fell headlong over a croquet wicket. Swearing pleasantly to himself he groped about in the wet bushes under the room lately tenanted by the absconding Featherby, and found the bags. He kept on to the rear of the dark inn and plunged into Featherby, who inconsiderately thrust the revolver into his face while satisfying himself of his accomplice's identity.

Hill, meanwhile, having failed after a long hot wait in the little exchange over the drug-store, to get the man he wished to talk to in Chicago, fell in with the town marshal, who was making his round of the hotel and cottage neighborhood. There had been several burglaries during the summer and he was at pains to impress the stranger with his vigilance. They bade each other good night at the inn door and the marshal disappeared toward the rear.

Hill had meant to chaff his brother detective about the ease with which he had crept past him on his way out and he was disappointed to find him gone. The draught from the open door had extinguished the lamp and he felt his way about with matches. A glimpse of the overturned chair sent him upstairs on the jump. The door of 18 stood open and the room was empty. He plunged downstairs again, and from the rear of the long rambling inn came the crack of a pistol.

Hill, being a philosopher, sat down on the veranda steps and lighted a cigar. Since Sanborn was pursuing Featherby he would undoubtedly catch him. If the man escaped there would be plenty of work to do before morning, and Hill awaited events.

The watchman, guiding himself by the flashes of his lantern, had set it full upon the backs of two men who started up suddenly in his path. The shaft of light played over the bent heads of the runners; one of them wore a long ulster and each carried a bag. He yelled to them to

stop and it was then that one of the flying men let go with his revolver. Nothing like this had ever occurred in Oriano before, and the marshal set off in hot pursuit. The innkeeper, aroused by the shots, thrust her head out of a third story window and screamed. The girl in 19 cowered in her room, crying.

The marshal ran into a clothes line that caught him under the chin and threw him down, and when he got on his feet he stopped to empty his pistol after the fugitives. Burgess and Featherby crossed the inn garden and reached a corn field, where they threw the bags over the fence, tumbled after them and lay still for a moment. The moon looked out haggardly from under a cloud and illuminated the landscape for a moment, and peering through the fence they saw the marshal stumbling across the garden. Then the clouds deepened over the moon and they resumed their flight, trotting silently through a long aisle of corn shocks for several minutes. Then Featherby, whose calm self-assurance had not deserted him at any moment, cut off sharply to one side, dropped down behind a shock and gathered Burgess close beside him. A moment later they caught sight of the marshal again, flashing his lantern among the corn near the fence. He was moving away from them and Burgess sighed his relief.

"Give me that bag," said Featherby. "Many thanks for your kind assistance, but the going will be easier for one. I've got to find a boat and clear out of this. Shake!"

"Good luck, Mr. Featherby," said Burgess, blowing hard. "Shall I give any message to your daughter?"

"Oh—er—you might just kiss her good-by for me."

He gathered up the two bags and left Burgess marveling at the ease with which he vanished. It was a good riddance. Webster G. Burgess reflected, rubbing his shins. He could now easily go back and find Hill, and abuse him for not telling him the truth about Featherby. He would dull the edge of his friend's wrath by abusing him for not telling him frankly in the first place that their long journey through the

Michigan woods had been in search of Featherby. Hill, he meditated, was altogether too cock-sure of himself.

Burgess was hot and tired from his run. Being a banker himself it tickled him to reflect that he had helped a fellow banker to make away with what was doubtless a considerable item, from the weight of the bag he had been carrying. It was all exceedingly interesting; it was the kind of adventure that Webster G. Burgess liked. He had heard Featherby deliver an address once at a bankers' convention, and he had seen him in his club in Chicago; but his business errands in that metropolis had to do mainly with the old Federal National and he had never enjoyed the acquaintance of the president of the Inner-Sea. The man who had so promptly and effectively taken advantage of his assault on Hill's ally—the man whom the girl had got in readiness to fly the moment Sanborn had been taken care of—was a livelier spirit than he had imagined Featherby to be. But there was no debating these points. Miss Featherby undoubtedly knew her own father. And she was an exceedingly pretty girl...

He must hurry back to the inn and find Hill, and he started off at a trot, bumping occasionally into a corn shock. Lights now appeared along the slope leading up to the inn, and in the town below he heard sounds of commotion.

He began a detour to carry him round to the dock side of the inn. He crawled through the fence into the muddy road, and as he rose to his feet the light of the marshal's lantern struck him full in the face. The man, not twenty feet distant, had been waiting for the re-appearance of the fugitives and Burgess had walked straight into him.

"Throw up your hands!" bawled the man, covering Burgess with his bob-light and revolver at the same time. "If you budge I'll plug you. Now where's the other one?"

"There isn't any other one," said Burgess, blinking.

"There's another one all right. I know you by that cap; and you might as well dig up that bag you were lugging."

"I never had any bag," said Burgess

with offended dignity. "I'm a guest at the Longview and came out for a walk."

The watchman had been drawing nearer, holding his light so that the revolver shone in it. Burgess held his arms above his head as bidden, and pondered means of escape. Hill must never know that a country bumpkin had arrested him. It was out of the question to run, for the marshal had already proved that his revolver was in perfect working order and was probably itching for another chance to use it.

"How would a hundred dollar bill look to you?" asked Burgess, standing on one foot.

"Nothing doing," was the quick retort. "You march right on ahead of me or I'll bore a hole clean through you. I've been looking for you fellows. You Chicago crooks needn't think you can come up here and put anything over on us. Turn round now and get a move on yourself. Slower! If you try that again I'll put a plug in your nut."

Down the muddy highway with the light and the pistol at his back Webster G. Burgess tramped, with his arms held as high as he could hold them. The pistol shots had aroused the town and the agitation in Main Street increased. Mr. Burgess was unhappy. It was an outrageous thing thus to be treated like a common criminal, and by a greenhorn village constable at that.

His further efforts to draw his captor into conversation proved unavailing. The man bade him shut up, and when Burgess slackened his pace the marshal prodded him in the back with the point of his revolver.

Arrived at the village, a crowd quickly collected, and the marshal, conscious of his newly-won laurels, yelled to them to make way for him.

With the crowd following, they proceeded to the town hall, and down to the calaboose in the cellar.

His vociferous protests against being locked up amused the marshal's train of admirers. When the officer began to search him he made a brief but futile resistance. Mr. Burgess' personal effects were laid out on the table: a bill-book containing nine hundred dollars,—an

amount in itself incriminating,—a bunch of keys, a cigar case, a letter from the President of the Prison Reform Association thanking him for a gift of a thousand dollars, a note from the Bishop of Oklahoma gratefully accepting an invitation to visit Mr. and Mrs. Burgess at their home in Indianapolis, and a few dollars in silver.

The duly accredited Oriano correspondent of the Chicago *Tribune*, who had not had an item for his paper for a year, eagerly scanned these articles. A crook whose very appearance marked him as a criminal of a high order had been apprehended, and the opportunity was not to be neglected. Burgess refused to give his name or to answer any questions, which further stamped him as a hardened criminal. The rusty hinges of the cell door shrieked derisively and Mr. Burgess was a prisoner.

IV

While Burgess had camped in the corn field, Sanborn, drawn by the pistol shots in the rear of the inn, had rushed back and found Hill.

"I tell you that friend of yours was the fellow who jumped on me; there's no other man on the place," said Sanborn hotly. "And Featherby shot at me with my own gun!"

"I knew that was your gun," said Hill, "but I supposed you were doing the shooting, so I waited for you to bring in the remains. We've got to find Featherby and be mighty quick about it. The water-front's his only way out."

He snapped out a plan of action and they separated.

It was Hill who scented the fugitive first. The sudden thumping of a gasoline engine attracted his attention as he crawled round a boathouse, and immediately a small launch sputtered out into the river toward the lake. There was no time for argument and as the boat stole by, grazing the shaky planks of the landing on which he stood, he seized it amidships. A man stooping over the engine rose and fired blankly into the dark. Hill flattened himself on the planks and

gripped the boat, and as his hands, slipping along the sides, caught hold of the painter, he paid out the rope. Another shot from the launch whistled over the prostrate Hill, and the detective grinned as he heard Sanborn yell from the shore. The fugitive seemed to know what he was about and the engine had begun to beat rhythmically at full speed when Hill gave the rope a yank that nearly swamped the launch. He heard Sanborn running toward him calling his name, and he yelled to him to hurry. The man in the launch was trying to get rid of the rope, and another sharp pull from the detective sent him sprawling into the water.

When Sanborn reached the scene a moment later there was a wild churning as of a mighty struggle, and the empty launch had buried its nose in the opposite bank, where the engine was beating itself to pieces.

"Want me, Cap?" yelled Sanborn.

"Not yet," answered Hill with a sputter. "I got 'im. Light a match and I'll pass 'im up."

The fugitive fought fiercely after he had been landed, but Sanborn had handcuffed him in a moment, and then Hill, throwing off his dripping mackintosh, squatted by the prisoner and told Sanborn to strike matches.

Three matches burned slowly in Sanborn's fingers, while Hill inspected the captive's face. When the first match had burned itself out Hill chuckled. After

the second charred stick curled and broke he chuckled again. While Sanborn held the third match Hill took the prisoner's head in his lap and tore open his collar. Sanborn sat silently on the prisoner's legs while this examination was in progress and he now watched Hill pass his hand inside the prisoner's shirt, the man meanwhile lying passive and motionless with his eyes closed.

Hill seemed suddenly moved to mirth; he struck his hands together smartly and chuckled again.

"What's the matter, Cap?"

"Nothing, Sandy. Only—only this aint Featherby!"

"Aint what?" bleated Sanborn, striking another match.

"Aint Featherby."

A smile stole slowly across the prisoner's face and he opened his eyes.

"Then who the devil is he? Why, he told me—"

"I never told you anything of the kind," said the prisoner, grinning. "I was traveling peacefully through

northern Wisconsin looking at the scenery when I ran into you. You seemed to want company and my horse was about done for, so I thought I'd go along and shake you when I got ready—and I reckon I did. If the old man here hadn't dropped into the sketch I wouldn't be here."

"Where's those bags you had?" demanded Sanborn of the prisoner.

"Probably over there in the launch,"



"How would a hundred-dollar bill look to you?" asked Burgess.

said Hill. "When you take another peep you'll find some of the neatest forged bonds and cleverest green goods ever put on the market."

A parting of the clouds brought the moon and starlight to play upon the scene, and the town marshal, heading a hastily improvised posse, saw the group by the boat-house and charged it noisily.

"This old cuss," said Hill, sighing as he rose to his feet, "isn't Featherby. This is Frank C. Baxter, with a string of aliases as long as from here to Toronto. I know him by that old hole in the right side of his barrel where he had his ribs cracked once. You can always tell him by that. Bond forger, bill raiser, confidence man. He's probably been selling green goods to Swedish farmers. It's a good haul all right. But this hasn't anything to do with Featherby."

"And I've been handling him as gently as a baby," snorted Sanborn. "And feeding him fake dope!"

They got the prisoner on his feet as the crowd gathered round with lanterns and the marshal demanded to know who they were and what they were doing.

"Here, marshal," said Hill, stamping his feet to squirt the water out of his shoes. "is a man you can stow away in your lock-up. But you'd better keep him handcuffed besides. You can't take chances on Frank C. Baxter even if he is a little old. He's the smoothest crook on the continent."

Hill explained himself to the marshal and introduced Sanborn. The marshal held his lantern to the prisoner's face and inspected the handcuffs.

"This is all right, boys," he said in a large manner for the benefit of his awe-struck citizens. "And by jing, I've got the other one."

He told with pride of his arrest of one of the men he had chased from the rear of the inn and caught finally after what he described as a fierce encounter.

"He's a bad one, but I guess he'll cool off by morning," he concluded.

"What's his name?" asked Hill, throwing away a wet cigar he had drawn from his pocket and lighting one Sanborn gave him.

"He wouldn't say anything, but there

was papers on him belonging to Webster G. Burgess, White River National Bank, Indianapolis. Stolen, of course. He had a big wad of money."

"Webster G. Burgess," remarked Hill, looking up at the moon, "is an old friend of mine, traveling for his health, and he has money to burn. He won't be angry about being locked up or anything like that; he has a tender feeling for the under dog and it'll tickle him to death to have a chance to sleep in jail."

"But there were two of these fellows," persisted the marshal excitedly. "this man and the one I nabbed. I saw 'em making round the Longview and each of 'em carrying a bag, just after I left you at the hotel. You better be careful what you say about him. If he's a friend of yours—"

"Well," Hill interrupted, "if your bondsmen are good fellows and don't mind being sued for damages by a man who keeps half a dozen lawyers on leash just to have 'em handy, why it's all right with me. But I rather advise you not to carry the joke too far. Let's go down and have a look at him."

Webster G. Burgess and Captain Tom Hill ate their breakfast in the inn dining-room the next morning with the landlady hanging nervously about them as she supplied their needs. The affairs of the night had greatly shaken her. She viewed the two men half in awe, half in suspicion. The firing of shots round her peaceful establishment, the pursuit and arrests of the night had made a mighty page in the local annals, and the reputation of the Longview as a peaceful refuge for decent people would not be helped by these occurrences. Many citizens had come up into the neighborhood of the inn to survey the scene of conflict, and the woman had been annoyed by their questions.

While Burgess was gloomily drinking his coffee Hill watched his friend out of the corner of his eye. The banker had shaved and dressed himself with his usual care, but his hour in jail had shaken his nerve. The marshal had released him with reluctance, after a long debate on Hill's credentials.

"Miss Foster hasn't been down yet?" the detective remarked to the fluttering landlady.

"Lord no; she had an awful night. I had to sit up with the poor child. It's enough to upset anybody with shootings and thieves about and strangers all over the place," she said with a trace of malice.

As she spoke, the girl appeared at the door. No other table was set and she advanced perforce to the one occupied by the men and bowed to them icily.

Burgess rose and drew out her chair for her with considerable manner.

"It's a bright morning," he said, "after the storm."

Her eyes showed traces of weeping. Hill was smitten with pity for her. Between her and Burgess yawned a wide chasm which no apologies could bridge. And being after all a wiser man than he seemed at times, he did not refer to the contretemps of the night. It was not his fault, in any analysis of the affair, that it had not been her father he had tried to set free; nor could a man possessing the slightest chivalry harbor resentment against the girl for her part in the error.

She limited her breakfast to toast and coffee and spoke of trains.

"I must get away as quickly as possible," she remarked. "If it isn't too much trouble, perhaps you can tell me the best way to reach Sturgeon Bay."

"There's an automobile available, and it's about a two-hour run. The south-bound train leaves there at two," said Hill kindly. "Or you can take a boat across to Skidomowoc and catch a train for Chicago there. I advise the motor as quicker and safer. Mr. Burgess and I shall be going by way of Sturgeon Bay and there will be plenty of room in the car for you."

She thanked him and the trio met a little later on the veranda. The waters of Green Bay twinkled blithely in the morning sunlight. A yacht steamed slowly toward Oriano and it at once caught and held the eye of all three.

"That," said Burgess in frank surprise, "is the *Esprit* I saw at Mackinac. She must have steamed fast to get here so soon."

The girl's face grew white; once more Hill saw her toss her head disdainfully.

In a few minutes the yacht dropped anchor and a boat put off for the dock.

As the boat drew nearer, the girl, watching it intently, gave an exclamation, and bounded down the steps and ran toward the shore. Hill and Burgess followed slowly. They saw the boat land and two men clamber out. One of these the girl clasped about the neck in a long embrace while the other and younger man stood a little apart.

"That's Dick Walters all right," remarked Burgess, "but who's that chap with him."

Hill did not reply but started hurriedly for the dock with Burgess close behind him. Hill's wits were trying to deal with this new situation.

The older of the men who had landed from the *Esprit* seemed to be making an explanation. He was talking with great animation, the girl bending toward him with deep interest. Then suddenly she held out both hands to the man Burgess had identified as Walters, and he bent and kissed her. It was a pretty bit of pantomime, but wholly inexplicable to the spectators.

Then the girl turned and beckoned to Burgess and Hill, and when they all stood together on the dock and Burgess and Walters had greeted each other, she said:

"Gentlemen, this is my father, Mr. Featherby. If I had known that he was on Mr. Walters' yacht when we were in Mackinac harbor a great many unpleasant things might not have happened. But everything will be all right now," she said, laughing a little wildly in her excitement. "And you have no business with my father, Mr. Hill, at all; Mr. Walters will explain that."

"Those directors in the Inter-Sea that were trying to embarrass Mr. Featherby are no longer interested in the matter," said Walters. "I have bought their interest in the bank. Their employment of a detective to hound Mr. Featherby was only part of a conspiracy to force him out because he refused to submit to them. Mr. Featherby was in a state of nervous collapse, which accounts for his

wanderings. He didn't take a cent of the bank's money. Those men who hired you were merely using you, Mr. Hill. It's true that Mr. Featherby left home without telling anyone where he was going; and thinking I was in the conspiracy against him. Miss Featherby and her sister, Mrs. Wilkerson, didn't appeal to me. Mr. Featherby has been on my yacht all the time, under the care of a physician; and knowing his enemies had employed a detective to watch him, no one was allowed on my boat. We've been looking for you, Edith, all over the lakes—your father and I—"

Hill fumbled his hat in embarrassment, and Walters, seeing that the detective was unconvinced, drew a paper from his pocket.

"This statement from the gentlemen who employed you to search for Mr. Featherby cancels your employment. It was an outrageous thing in every particular and if I had been looking after my interests as I should have been it would never have happened."

"And if I hadn't jumped to the conclusion that you had broken faith with Father—" began Miss Featherby, with the tears flooding her eyes.

"You wouldn't have broken our engagement but would have come to me in the first place," said the young man, laughing.

Two evenings thereafter Burgess and Hill were dining together in the Jefferson Club, Chicago, and after dinner they meant to see a musical show before taking the night train for home.

"What hurt Miss Featherby most," said Burgess, "was having kissed old

Baxter, thinking he was her father she had got me to help get away."

"I don't blame her," said the detective, "—now that the papers have flashed up Baxter's record and she knows on what a rogues' gallery mug she planted her kiss. What I regret is that I didn't see you lugging that smooth old crook's baggage over the corn field, and the look on your face when that town marshal marched you down Main Street to the lock-up. I'd like to have a picture of those incidents to show your wife."

"My wife has always wanted a rope of pearls," said Burgess, cutting himself a morsel of Camembert, "and I ordered it by telegraph as soon as we got to town. I saved a thousand, you know, on that bet we made at Mackinac so I felt like blowing myself."

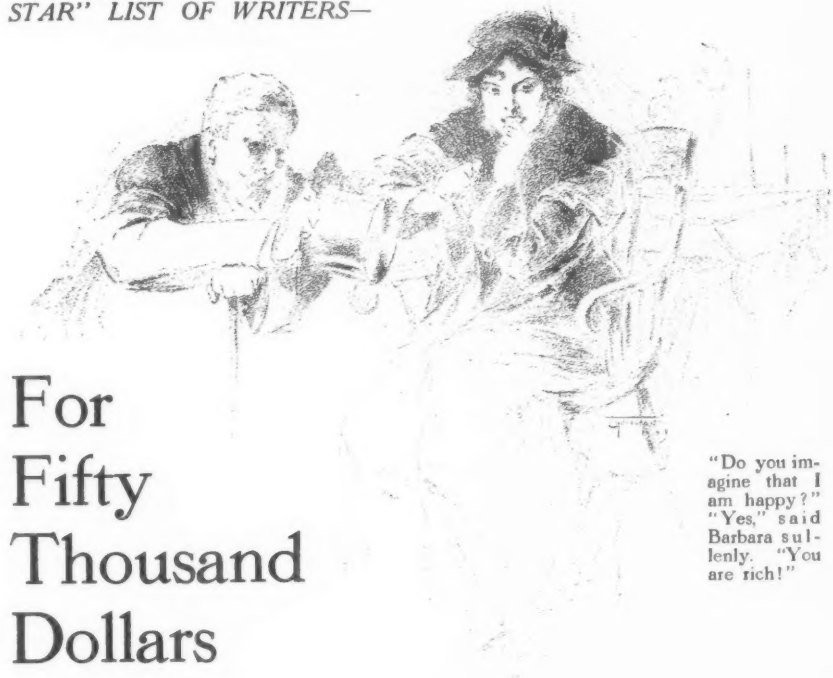
"It's a delicate technical point about the bet," said the detective, "for I did pinch a man I wasn't looking for, and besides, the moment old Featherby landed on the dock up there at Green Bay he was my prisoner. And there's always a question whether he hadn't really pinched a lot of money, which Walters made good for the girl's sake. But that's none of my business now. When Walters shoved that paper at me on the dock the incident was closed and I was off the job."

"But it wasn't your fault that the real Featherby turned up there; it was the merest chance. It was one of these coincidences that only occur once in a lifetime. It was just pure luck," declared Burgess.

"Well," remarked the detective meditatively, as Burgess looked at his watch and rose, "all life is just that."



A POWERFUL STORY BY A
NEW ENTRY IN THE "ALL-
STAR" LIST OF WRITERS—



For Fifty Thousand Dollars

"Do you imagine that I am happy?"
"Yes," said Barbara sullenly. "You are rich!"

By KATHARINE HILL

Illustrated by O. Toaspern

IT'S a job," Lane said, in a curious, hushed voice.

He leaned over Barbara's shoulder and spread the letter before her with shaking fingers. It seemed so incredible, such a departure almost from natural laws, that Charley Lane should actually have landed a job at last.

But Barbara was looking at the letter with a dismayed expression.

"Why, it's in Michigan!" she cried.

"It's only for six months. You wouldn't mind Michigan for six months," he reassured her.

"No, but traveling expenses, you unpractical creature!" She reached for a pencil and began calculating on the margin of the letter. "They give you your expenses, but not mine."

"Twenty dollars, though," he put in eagerly, "above the price of the ticket. We won't need anything to eat. We can take things in a basket. Why, how much have we spent on food the last three days? About a dollar and a quarter!"

Barbara laid down her pencil and laughed at him a little, gently. He was so absurd, this husband of hers, half visionary, half child and wholly poet. She had to be business-like for both.

All sorts of questions to which they had given no thought at the time of their imprudent, rapturous marriage had lately lifted hydra heads and clamored to be heard. The question of rent, the question of food, the question of clothes. There had been a little money at first, and they had spent it carelessly, for of course the poems and the play would be

bringing in returns long before it could be gone. But Lane's wares had found no buyers, and when in despair he began to look for work, an untrained man of nearly thirty, his quest had been, till today, without success.

It was not much of a job that offered now, through a cousin's kindness—this humble substitute work on a country newspaper—but it would bring in something, and even Barbara, great as were her demands for him, did not oppose his accepting it. She had not told her husband of a fresh need for money, which would be upon them in the near future, though she knew that she could keep the secret little longer. Each evening she planned to tell him, and each evening he came in from his fruitless search for work so tired and discouraged that she could not bring herself to speak.

Only last night he had said, "Thank God, at least, that there is no child. At worst you could go home, and I could—tramp."

She must tell him soon, and now that a little money was assured he might even be glad to learn of the child that was coming. She opened her lips to speak, and then, as so often before, left the words unsaid. But her silence was deliberate, this time, and not prompted by cowardice, for a fresh thought had struck her, a way to spare Lane anxiety and pain, which she joyfully welcomed. After all, the money that he was to earn was very little, and the expense of the doctors and nurses and all that she was likely to require, would be by no means small. But there are inexpensive ways of bringing babies into the world—if it were not so, most of the babies would have to stay out of it.... There are free wards in hospitals.

In that moment between the imperceptible opening and closing of her lips, Barbara had resolved to face her trial alone, un comforted by her husband's presence, without the alleviations money provides, and with no support but the courage given her by love. He should think that economy alone decided her not to accompany him, and only when he came back to her, when the suffering was all in the past and the joy remained, should he learn that he was a father.

In the end Lane let himself be persuaded, and a morning came when, having said good-by to him dry-eyed in the station, Barbara found herself walking dazedly back to their little flat. For the present she could stay there, for the rent was paid a few days ahead; but as soon as she was able to arrange it she moved to a fourth-floor bedroom, for which she paid only two dollars a week, and from which she descended only after dark, to make her necessary purchases and to take the exercise she grew more reluctant to take by day.

It was three months after Lane had left her that, walking so one evening, she felt suddenly ill, and doubting her ability to walk home, committed the rare extravagance of taking a street-car. It was almost empty; the windows were open, and though the night was warm the motion created a breeze which at first refreshed her. As the car proceeded, however, more and more people got on it, until the effect of freshness was lost in the discomfort of overcrowding, and to her further dismay Barbara recognized a man who swung onto the back platform.

Walter Denbigh was a sculptor, successful and rich; he had loved Barbara since she was a girl; there had been a half-engagement between them, but it was broken on Lane's appearance. It was characteristic of them both that, while Denbigh had concealed the pain her desertion caused him and continued on terms of casual friendship with her, Barbara still felt some resentment towards him because he had advised her not to marry till Lane was drawing some sort of a salary. It is not easy to forgive advice that has not been followed, and which turns out to be good; so, while she was by now feeling so ill that she was glad to have any friend near her, as she fancied she might need support on leaving the car, Barbara would have chosen the barest acquaintance in preference to Walter. He caught sight of her almost at once, and came towards her, capturing a strap above.

"You are not well," he began, not waiting for her to greet him. "I have never seen you look so badly in my life."

She summoned a constrained smile. "I

am not feeling well, and I am glad to meet you; I am going to ask you to get off the car at my corner and walk home with me."

They talked a little on indifferent subjects, while she felt his gaze on her face with an intent scrutiny under which she must have winced had she not put force on herself to remain impassive. And he must take her home; he would insist on coming in; he would see the poverty in which she lived and would blame Charley! The idea was intolerable, and as they neared the street where she would leave the car, she made a hasty attempt to rid herself of the escort she had asked.

"I feel much better now," she said quickly. "It was only a passing faintness. It's quite unnecessary for you to come with me."

"Nonsense!" he returned, and swinging off the car first was ready to give her the support she was not sorry for on leaving it. "Now, which way, and how far is it?"

"Down there—it is only about seven blocks."

A taxi was passing slowly, and he raised his stick.

"Oh, we can walk," cried Barbara. "It is really not far."

"Madness!" he retorted.

To her, madness seemed a kindly name for the extravagance that takes a taxi to go seven blocks; once she would not have felt in this way, but economy, particularly with women, and where circumstances enjoin its practice as a virtue, readily becomes a passion.

They passed the short drive in silence. When the cab drew up before the shabby house where Barbara had the cheapest room, he still said nothing; but she was conscious that he was thinking deeply.

All the rooms in the house had folding beds, which simulated other articles of furniture, and it had been pointed out to Barbara when she came to look for a room, that she might receive visitors as if in a family sitting-room. She led him up the badly-lighted stairs with no misgivings on this score; but she knew that the uneven steps, the odors of cooking, washing, and the like, all aroused his curiosity and condemnation. And though the room before the door of which she

finally paused, was clean, it was not luxurious enough to counteract the impression produced by halls and staircase.

"And now, Barbara Lane," he burst out, closing the door behind him and facing about upon her, "perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what you are doing in a hole like this? Where is your husband? Why you are looking so ill? And all about the mystery in general."

Listlessly she explained, leaving out all reference to the child. She had sunk into the one comfortable chair the room contained, and was leaning back, very pale. She was less beautiful than he had ever seen her, but, in the eclipse of her brilliancy, not less appealing to him.

"That isn't all," he said, when she had finished. "If we were in France, Barbara, it would embarrass neither of us if I were to say that I can see and understand."

They were not in France, and Barbara had hoped that he would not see. She had forgotten that she was dealing with a sculptor, to whom every curve and line of the human body, however draped, carried meaning. She felt her cheeks sting.

"I think it would have been better if you had not spoken of that," she cried. "It has nothing to do with you."

He had loved her from the time when she was fifteen, a straight, slim little girl with waving red hair on her shoulders; nothing that concerned her left him indifferent. He saw her now, alone and in poverty, not many weeks from the time when she would endure the wonderful experience of motherhood. His smile was a little constrained, as he repeated:

"Nothing to do with me, of course. Unless, Barbara, there were something I could do for you. You are alone and ill, you are—forgive me, you said it yourself—you are poor. Though you never felt anything stronger for me, at least we have always been friends, and you can, I hope, trust me. Will you let me lend you some money? Enough to remove half your troubles would be no more to me than pouring you a glass of water. Be kind to me, and say yes."

He did not really think that she would let him lend her money, but the chance

seemed worth the trying. He never knew what a deadly temptation it was to Barbara to borrow from some one, who, as he had truly said, could be trusted never to presume upon having loaned. She resisted the temptation at the cost of her serenity of mind.

"You must be mad to think of such a thing. God knows I need the money, but I cannot act unworthily if I die for it. I do trust you, Walter; it is not that, but—it isn't only my honor that is involved, but Charley's. It's out of the question. I wish you had not spoken of it. You really would be willing to lend me quite a lot of money, wouldn't you?"

"Anything," he said, in a low voice. "All that I have."

"As much as twenty thousand dollars? You would *give* me twenty thousand dollars if I asked for it, wouldn't you?"

The man's face grew a little gray at the passionate accent of longing in her voice, as she named the sum, of petty or staggering importance according to the point of view. "I would give you a hundred thousand now, at this moment—it would be less than a year's income, and I swear before God, you would never have cause to regret having taken it. Barbara, if you would—"

She laughed hysterically. "If I could, rather. I would, if I could—but it's impossible. Oh, impossible! Twenty thousand would be enough; twenty thousand, nothing at all to you, and to us the difference between life and death."

"It's a badly planned world, isn't it? Here are Charley and I: we love each other; we are young and healthy; we could be so exquisitely happy that the angels in heaven above might well go envying him and me. And because of money—gross, wretched, sordid money—we have to wear out our youth in heart-breaking worries about the contemptible necessities of life. He is a poet, who ought to be fed as the ravens are, and take no more thought to ways and means than a bird. He is forced to choose between his art, which is the breath of his soul—and me, his heart's blood. We are lovers, and to subject love to considerations like these is like steeping roses in dishwater. Soon I shall have his baby, and it ought to be

a joy and a miracle to both of us. I have not even dared to tell him that it is coming! To see what might be so beautiful made so—"

"Be still!" Walter cried, at the end of his patience. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself." She stared, the thread of her passionate plaint cut short. "Yes, ashamed of yourself—to sit there and talk like this to me. You have all the essentials of happiness, with the one drawback that is as common a condition of humanity as teeth. You really talk as though you thought your case unique. And you say these things to me. Do you imagine that I am happy?"

"Yes," said Barbara sullenly. "You are rich!"

"I am rich. Yes. I have all the pretty gold pieces, or nice crinkly slips of green paper that I like to ask the banks to give me to play with. But—it sounds banal enough, though it's profoundly true—my money can't buy me the things that make happiness, the things you have, heaped up and running over: love, youth and your baby coming. If you had a million dollars in Confederate money, would that make you happy?"

"But I have *not* got Charley. He has been away for three months; it will be three months more before I see him."

She said this to the man who had loved her hopelessly for ten years. He looked at her curiously. "Oh, well, have it your own way," he said, with the air of abandoning the discussion. "You're a very unhappy person, and much to be sympathized with."

"Nevertheless," she said, speaking more calmly than before, but with a certain pale stubbornness in her face, "our case is not like that of everyone else. You are an artist, and you ought to know that Charley does not recoil before work. The work he wants to do is more arduous than day labor, more mentally exhausting than the affairs of a bank. He is hindered from doing the thing he was born for; something divine is being killed here, that is all. But I tell you, that to earn twenty thousand dollars I would lie down on the rack with a smile. I would have my right hand cut off. I would sign away a million dollars for ten years hence—five years—three, even.



Lane was shaking hands with a
little girl in a white coat.

I want my happiness now. I want it with the bloom on. If I can't have it that way, I do not consider that I have it at all."

After a pause somewhat longer than usually punctuates a conversation, Walter asked: "Do you really mean that you would do anything in the world for twenty thousand dollars?"

A dark thought brushed through her mind like a bat on a black wing. "Anything—honorable—" she stammered. He divined her suspicion. She could think that of him!

When he had made his proposal clear to her, Barbara gasped. She was not at once able to take it in. Impossible at the first glance, a closer examining revealed a striking practicability in his plan. Nor could she doubt, as he spoke of her child, that he thought the fifty thousand dollars he offered in exchange for it, a low price.

"I could adopt twenty babies to-morrow," he said. "They would not be yours, your child! You will have others. You would go to the best of private hospitals, and I would, of course, pay all expenses. When Lane comes back you would be well again. You say yourself that you are not happy in the prospect of your child, so why should it cost you anything to give it up? You will simply be enduring some pain, as you expressed yourself so ready to do in order to earn fifty thousand dollars. You would tell Lane that you had received a legacy, and he need never know that your second child is not your first."

Perhaps the women who most love their husbands love their children, in the old phrase, rather as "gages of love," than for their own sakes. Barbara's love for Lane was still in the passionate stage where the thought of children has no place. It is difficult to fancy Francesca forgetting Paolo in the sorting of baby-linen. The child was still to Barbara an intruder... with a veiled face.

How should she not accept Denbigh's proposal, a proposal which offered her all,—or so it seemed to her,—and at a price which was no price, a price that she was able to pay without regret, without sensation of any kind? It was as though she had suffered a limb to be amputated, while the sources of feeling were dead-

ened under a powerful anaesthetic. She felt nothing, nothing—but later, the loss must make itself felt.

The child was a girl, straight and healthy. Barbara felt no love for it, and when it was taken from her, as was done at once, she felt no pang to see her daughter pass, in the nurse's arms, out of the room and out of her life. The money remained, the money that meant freedom for Charley, that meant the cloudless dawn of their happiness together, like a new marriage after the long and bitter separation. Her anxieties removed, Barbara came back to health a radiant creature; all the marks that her first two years of marriage had left on her beauty seemed wiped out, and she bloomed with a fresh maidenhood. The deception which she must practice on her husband troubled her a little, but not greatly.

Lane asked no questions; it seemed wholly natural to him that money for his necessities should drop upon him like manna from the heavens; the only part of the affair that puzzled him was that it had not happened sooner. It was an ideal sum of money, which, as Barbara explained, a great-aunt had left her, just sufficient for their simple necessities: for travel, for the few graceful clothes that Barbara needed.

They traveled, leisurely, having nothing to hurry them, going much to the out-of-the-way places, little to London and Paris. Greece knew them, and Portugal, and tiny forgotten towns of France and Italy. They were years of exquisite happiness, the happiness of Barbara's dreams, when no sordid cares disturbed them, and beauty was around them always like a glittering veil hiding the harshness of the world behind. During these years Lane wrote much, and it is on what was then written, in fact, that his enduring fame will rest, rather than on the play, his only essay in that line, which is held by many critics to be unequal, amateurish even, in parts.

These poems were their only children. No second child came to Barbara. Feeling that their perfect intimacy must have been interrupted by the claims of a third entity, she was rather glad than other-

wise; but the time came when she divined that Charley longed for children. He said nothing of it to her, fearing that she might construe his regrets as reproach, but she noticed his longing manner of looking at children, and into his poetry, where his clear soul bared itself, she read what he did not tell her. There were many poems about children, the children they encountered; one about a little dead Greek boy touched even Barbara, unawakened as was that side of her nature.

In the years of their traveling they lost sight, necessarily, of many of their friends; of Denbigh they saw and heard

nothing directly, though photographs of his work appeared from time to time in the magazines devoted to art. He had begun to exhibit charming little statuettes of children. It was noticeable that, though the face varied, the same model must have been used for the body: now a child dryad blossoming out of a suggested tree, now a little mermaid tossed up on the crest of a wave.

It was only at such times as these photographs came to her notice that Barbara gave a thought to Denbigh, or to her daughter; and she did not even know what name he had given the child. It seemed improbable that they should ever



"Why, Barbara, I'd give all I've written a hundred times over for a little red-headed girl like Denbigh's."

meet again, as he lived chiefly in America and their habits were nomadic; yet it came about in the most natural manner in the world.

The sculptor paid an occasional visit to Paris; at the house of a mutual friend, Barbara, in a room full of guests, suddenly found herself looking into Denbigh's eyes, the length of the salon away. At the same moment Lane recognized him, and he spoke to her of his presence.

"And, good Lord! What a lovely child he has with him!" he added. Before Barbara could make up her mind how to avoid a meeting, or in what spirit it could be conducted if it was inevitable, Lane had crossed to Walter's side and was shaking hands, first with the sculptor, then with a little girl in a white beaver hat and a coat all of white fur. Against the white her gold-red hair burned like a bonfire on snow; her face was as delicate as an apple blossom, and the soft eyes, which she raised a little timidly to her father's face, were like brown pansies.

Barbara caught her breath, with a sudden feeling of startled envy. She could not remember to have seen a more exquisite child in her life, and she crossed the room to meet and speak with her, with all thought of embarrassment or hesitation swept from her mind. She knew that she had never before realized the existence of her daughter, and that she was a personality to be reckoned with.

The little girl was looking up at Denbigh, with a smile of complete confidence and understanding; and there was a tinge of mischief in the child's expression, an entire concentration of devotion in the man's, about which there was a shade of pathos. Barbara felt suddenly angry at the contrast between that smile for Denbigh, and the half shy manner of greeting herself. "And I am her own mother!" she thought. She blamed the child vaguely for her ignorance of a relationship that she might have felt instinctively; then, with a revulsion of feeling, laughed at her own absurdity.

Lane was very silent during their drive home together, and afterwards, in their sitting-room at the hotel, he sat

a long time staring at a book, the pages of which he did not turn. His wife knew the signs of his various moods, and this meant a dark one. She tried to coax him from it. For a while she could draw no response at all from him; at last, to her reiterated questions, he said: "It's that little girl of Denbigh's—I can't get her out of my head!"

Barbara paled. "Yes, she is a nice little thing," she admitted constrainedly.

"A nice little thing! She is the most lovely child I have ever seen in my life,—she's the incarnation of all that is exquisite in childhood—she's a rainbow, she's a spring song. I'm in love with her."

"I'll ask Walter to let her spend an afternoon here, since you like her so much," said the mother. His admiration of his child was horribly painful to her. Her act of twelve years back began to appear to her under a new light, and her heart suddenly shook with fear.

"I don't want her for an afternoon," said Lane. "I want her for life. As she isn't mine, I never want to see her again. I never saw a child in my life that I coveted as I covet her, and I have never seen a child—Barbara! never a little bandy-legged imp of the gutter—for the last dozen years, that I wouldn't have given all I have in the world, except you, to call it mine."

"Your poetry?" she asked, in a desperate, calm voice.

"Poetry! Tinkle of words, pretentious or commonplace—did you hear her laugh? It was like a fountain in sunshine. Why, Barbara, I'd give all I've written a hundred times over for a little red-headed girl like Denbigh's! I wish I were a day-laborer, digging roads from dawn till dark, and coming home in the evenings with a bag of candy for my baby. That's what life means, Barbara, and we've missed it, you and I!"

It was the knife turning in the wound, and the tears in her eyes fell. He was on his knees by her side on the instant, abasing himself, explaining his words away.

"Barbara! I'll go out and kick myself! As though what I feel about this could touch what you must suffer and keep from me. I ought to have guessed your pain from mine; I ought to have

thought before I spoke—we'll never speak a word of it again. And we *have* been happy—we are happy—and we're spared a lot of suffering. They're always getting sick—kids are—"

But she did not heed him. She had acted, she could still tell herself, in good faith for his sake, and the monstrous nature of the thing she had done had never till now revealed itself to her. The rights of the father she had not considered; she had stolen and sold a thing that was half himself, and the knowledge of the wrong she had done him came in the same moment with the first glimmering perception, which time could only strengthen, of the greater wrong she had done herself.

For the sight of her daughter had stirred in Barbara all the sleeping forces of maternity, and Lane's words only completed the bitter awakening. She

knew now that the golden ease of the last twelve years had not been given them for nothing, but had been too dearly bought. The price she must pay for it was this strange new hunger of the heart, never to be stilled, which she should take with her to the grave.

Not the least part of her suffering was the fact that it must be concealed from her husband. Confession would have been relief to her, but she knew that she had no right to burden him with the load of regret that her deliberate act had bound on her own shoulders for life.

For life indeed! The little, lovely, wistful face she had seen to-day—could she ever put it from her memory?

And when she should forget this, she knew that the flesh of her hands must still remember, even to cold old age, the soft, warm, thrilling clasp of little fingers.

ON page 484 of this issue you will find "The Four Vaucaires," by L. J. Beeston. Don't fail to read the story. It is the second of Mr. Beeston's narratives of that gallant duelist, Count Saros, and his beloved King, Nicolas, of Assila. It is a romance of "The Prisoner of Zenda" type—fair ladies and gallant gentlemen, court balls and sword play in wayside inns—the sort of story our writers seem to have forgotten. We commend it to you, especially if your day at home or in the office has been trying; commend it as a prescription for relaxation from worry or fatigue.

The Previous Chapters of "What Will People Say?"

THIS "Vanity Fair" of American literature gives as brilliant and accurate a picture of New York society in 1913 as Thackeray gave of the English foibles and ostentation of

his time—a picture of that metropolitan society of to-day which cares not what its members do but considers it the unpardonable sin to be found out.

Lieutenant Harvey Forbes, U. S. A., a handsome Southerner just home from fighting Moros, is introduced into this society world by Murray Ten Eyck, a Knickerbocker of fashion. At first Forbes looks on the display with intolerance. He sees the never-ending parade of luxuriously dressed women and thinks: "All these women are paid for by men. What do the women give in return? What do they pay?" He notes their fragile and languorous appearance, but he is to learn that they are capable of making or breaking the lives of strong men.

Persis Cabot, a young woman of wealth and beauty, is the center of an exclusive circle in New York. Ten Eyck presents Forbes. Ten Eyck believes Forbes has a small fortune, but he has only his army pay.

Forbes is fascinated by Persis and follows her about to the different cafés where society folk turkey-trot. He learns the dance and is in a rap-ture whenever Persis is his partner.

In constant attendance on Persis is "Little Willie" Enslee, insignificant but heir of enormous wealth. Everywhere Forbes hears Persis' name linked with Enslee's. Mrs. Neff, a widow, who is also a member of this "set," expects Persis to marry Enslee without loving him, just as she expects to force her daughter Alice, who is stealing meetings with young and impecunious Stowe Webb, to marry the elderly Senator Tait.

Persis is secretly engaged to Enslee but when Forbes asks her if she is engaged, she evades.

Forbes gives a luncheon for Persis' party at the Ritz-Carleton. He is dazed at the cost. While they are eating Enslee declares he is going to take a day to run up to his country place, which is not yet opened. Winifred Mather, a substantial beauty always in the party, exclaims that they will all go along. And so a house-party is arranged.

Forbes takes Persis home in a taxi. The windows of the taxi are made opaque with rain. Forbes takes Persis in his arms and she allows the embrace. But she is furious with herself a moment later for fear some one has seen.

Forbes now decides to win Persis. He goes to Enslee's house party, where his host's stately mansion and magnificent estates—Enslee's strongest fighting weapons—will be arrayed against him. The first morning there gives him his first opportunity.

Forbes tubs early and goes out. Persis comes to her window. Forbes tosses lilacs to her. She dresses and they roam while he tells his love. Persis keeps him at arm's length, because she is afraid of what the people at the house will say if some one peeps through the blinds. That day Enslee urges Persis to marry him at once. She refuses and meets Forbes again late that night for a walk.

The moon is gone when they creep back into the house. They stop to kiss good-night again in the upper hall, and as they close their doors, Forbes hears a third door close. Some one else has been in the hall!

The listener was Willie Enslee. But he did not recognize Persis, so he tells her he is going to lock out the romantic couple the next night as a joke. Persis tells Forbes, and that makes him decide to ask Persis to marry him—and to tell her of his poverty—the next afternoon when they are riding through a wood.

In the meantime Senator Tait has added his warning to Ten Eyck's that Forbes must not fall in love with Persis, but Forbes is sure he will win her. So when he tells her he is poor he is rejoiced that Persis begins planning how they can struggle along. But she has misunderstood what "poor" means. "Poor" people, to her, are those who have only \$25,000 or so a year. When she finds that he has only his two thousand a year from the army, she tells him people can do without love more easily than they can without money.

As they come out of the wood a reporter in an automobile meets them. He recognizes Persis, who has now decided to marry Enslee, and she is in a panic lest her presence with Forbes be misconstrued.

What Will People Say?

The Great Novel of
New York Society of To-day

BY RUPERT HUGHES

Author of "Pop," "Excuse Me," "Miss 318," etc.

Illustrated by James Montgomery Flagg

THE reporter's fleeting smile and his acidulous "Thank you, Miss Cabot," convinced Persis that the man had, with the sophistication reporters learn too well, put the worst possible interpretation on her forest promenade with Forbes. This was all that it needed to turn her disappointment into dismay, her bewilderment into panic. She had lost rhythm with life and the world.

She thrust one boot into its stirrup, swung the other across the saddle, and jerked her horse's head impatiently. Her temper threw his motor machinery out of gear and he found himself with at least two too many feet. He bolted and sidled in a ragged, syncopeated gait, snorting and flinging his head angrily. She could not get him into meter with himself, or her, or with the horse that Forbes brought clattering alongside.

At first she had felt infinitely sorry for Forbes, and indignant only at the fate that made him poor. As she rode her fretful horse she began to feel infinitely sorry for herself and indignant at Forbes. He had permitted her to think that he had ample means. He had encouraged her to love him seriously. Her



resentment was the fierce resentment people feel when those they love and idealize do not live up to the standards set for them.

Forbes had come into her life like a bull sauntering into a china shop. A moment before his entrance everything was arranged, precise, exquisite and formal—a little cold, perhaps, but charmingly definite. Now everything was crashing about her. She must walk warily among the débris or she would suffer.

Persis was an orderly soul; she had not suspected that she was also a passionate one. She was more like Forbes than either of them understood. For all the deep intensity of his nature, training had made him first the soldier. In battle he was the fiery warrior, but battles were infrequent, and almost all his days had been spent in acquiring and instilling precision, exactness in the manual of arms, rectitude in the lines of drill formations, perfection in uniform and equipment, in the company books and reports—everywhere.

So Persis had acquired from infancy the rituals of household service, the proprieties and their observance, the arrangement of ceremonies, social book-

keeping. And now she was discovering what a disorganizer love is, what a smasher of china, what an anarchy among plans.

Before the advent of Forbes, she had almost given up the expectation of love. Then out of nothing the fates evoked this man. If he had confessed even a pittance of twenty-five thousand a year, that would have meant at worst "love in a cottage"—*cottage* being an elastic word. Friends of hers owned cottages of palatial dimensions. But two thousand a year!—With a prospect of twenty-four hundred a year!—She simply could not imagine it.

She tried to mask her anger under an unusually cheerful manner. She spoke with approval of the landscape, chattered vivaciously about everything, and all the while was burning with resentment. It was small wonder that Forbes felt the blight of her wrath when the very horses knew of it. The most determined politeness can never imitate the fine flower and bouquet of genuine enthusiasm. But what could Forbes say to set things right? The one effective speech would have been a declaration of independent means, a smiling disclaimer of poverty: "I was only joking; I am really very rich."

That would have reestablished the *entente*. But that was the one thing Forbes could not say. He rode on at Persis' side, a silent and dejected prisoner of circumstances, a spy captured in the enemy's camp, in the enemy's uniform.

Eventually they reached the Enslee place—the mountain that was Enslee's, with the stately pleasure dome he had decreed there. The majesty belittled Forbes still more. The beauty of it shamed him.

They trotted across the granite bridge and urged the horses to the ascent.

The horses plodded doggedly up and up; and the beauty of every spot as they reached it wore away Persis' anger. It was difficult to feel a bitterness against anybody, even against the Fates, when they permitted some aromatic shrub to throw an almost visible veil of perfume about her and another to dangle before

her eyes a smiling throng of blossoms almost audibly singing like clustered cherubim. The mere dapple of shadow and sun-splash was felicity, and the white road that curved among its lawns was almost voluptuously sinuous, like a tawny Cleopatra on a green divan or one of Titian's high-hipped Venuses.

The gardening was formal; the swards were shaved; the trees seemed to have been whisk-broomed; the shrubs had been curled and scented; but they were beautiful, and only wealth could have collected them or kept them at their best. And above them all loomed the house, a chateau of stately charm, enthroned in beauty.

Forbes saw how good it was and coveted it. But it was as if Naboth the soldier had envied David the King his garden. Persis saw how good it was, and she could possess it all, become the *châtelaine* of this place.

She spoke her thought aloud:

"It's this sort of thing, Harvey, I love, and need—beautiful things and plenty of them."

"I understand," Forbes groaned.

"If only you could get them for us!"

"If only I could!"

A little further she checked her horse, whose trunk was heaving like a bellows. It was in a little colonnade of trees with an arched roof of green leaves in more than Gothic confusion. Birds were everywhere, fluting, fighting, and building.

"Listen to them, Harvey," Persis murmured with a kind of sad joy, as he reined in alongside. "It's their courtship time, too. And the male bird is the better dressed of the two."

Forbes noticed how sweet her throat was as it arched back, and the under part of her chin, how beautiful. They were no longer his to admire, and bitterness came into his heart. His smile was close to a sneer as he said:

"The males put on their Sunday best and pour out their finest songs, and the lady bird chooses, they say, the one that wears the best clothes."

She gave him a look that was both rebuking and rebuked and urged her horse along. But a little later her response to beauty filled her again with

the contentment of repletion, and she checked her horse by the marble-walled pool whose surface was broken and circled here and there by gleaming red fish with lacy fins and tails; they were darting and leaping in acrobatic ecstasies.

"They're making love too, I suppose," Persis said, a trifle anxiously, and he was still aggrieved enough to answer:

"And the fish ladies also select the gentleman with the most gold."

She stared at him a moment, hurt and shamed. Then she flung back at him:

"Then you oughtn't to blame us—us females for making the wisest choice we can. It must be a law of nature."

"It must be," he sighed, so humbly that she regretted her victory. She would have put out her hand to comfort him, but she saw above them Willie Enslee leaning across the balustrade. She lifted her horse into a jog trot, and they rode into the court where a chauffeur waited to take the horses to the stable.

Willie greeted them in his whiniest tone:

"Where on earth were you? We've been home for ages."

"We got off the main road," Persis said as she climbed the steps, followed by Forbes, "and the horses were tired and—"

"I was awfully anxious. I was about to start out to look for you."

"There was no occasion to be anxious."

"Besides, your father telephoned you."

"My father! Is he back in New York?"

"No, he telephoned from Chicago. He was just leaving on the twenty-hour train. He couldn't wait till you got back."

"What did he have to say?"

"Lots." Willie looked uneasily at Forbes as if he were in the way.

"I'll be changing for dinner," Forbes said with uncomfortable haste.

"You'd better be cooking the dinner," Willie said. "Winifred is counting on your soldierly experience to help her out."

So Forbes went to the kitchen to salute, and report for duty. As he entered

the house, he looked back to see Enslee leading Persis up the marble steps to the little temple where he proposed regularly.

Forbes' heart thudded heavily in his breast. He felt helpless to protest or intervene in any way. Persis was up at auction. He had bidden her in under a misapprehension of the upset price, and she was put up for sale again.

XXXVII

As they mounted the steps, Persis felt something of Forbes' regret. She was a slave on the block and the man she wanted for owner was crowded from the mart.

"What did Father have to say?" she asked in a dull tone, already despairing.

"I—I—it wasn't very pleasant."

"Hand it to me."

"He said to break it to you gently."

"Well, speak up, Willie. Break it: for the Lord's sake, break it."

He led her to a bench in the temple. "I hardly know where to begin."

"Begin at the ending."

"Well, you see, your poor governor—"

"Has lost all his money."

"Well—yes—in a way."

"It's getting to be rather a habit with the poor old boy, isn't it? Is he smashed up badly?"

"Pretty badly."

"The house in town and the country place will have to go?"

"I'm afraid so."

"The cars and the horses—my car too?"

"It looks like it."

"Then I needn't worry about its being a last year's model," she laughed. Willie stared at her admiringly:

"Gad, but you're a good loser."

"I try to be—a calm winner, a light loser. I'm awfully sorry for Father. Did you—did you tell him anything?"

"I told him we were engaged."

She shivered and mumbled: "What did he say to that?"

"He seemed immensely relieved. He said: 'God bless her.' His voice was very faint, but I think that's what he said."

"Perhaps he said, 'God help her!'"

"Maybe he did," Willie sighed. "Anyway, we're to meet him in town tomorrow."

He stared at her with hungry eyes and his little lean fingers crept toward the exquisite hand of hers that lay supine, relaxed, with upturned fingers like the petals of an open rose. He took that flower in his hands timidly. She looked down into his famished eyes and smiled pitifully—perhaps a little for him, certainly for herself.

He overestimated the tenderness in her gaze and squeezed her fingers in his, fiercely. She winced and drew her hand away.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said.

"It was this ring again," she explained, though she had not meant to say the "again."

"My ring? Our ring?" he murmured with such joy that her sportsmanship compelled a last effort at playing fair:

"Under the circumstances," she said, "I think I'd better return it to you—with thanks for the loan."

"I don't want it back," he gasped. "I won't have it back."

"You didn't agree to marry a beggar."

"I want to marry you—just you," he pleaded. "The engagement stands."

"You're terribly polite, but I can't—not for charity."

"Charity—bosh!" he stormed. "I can't get along without you. You couldn't get along without a lot of money, Persis. If—if you'll let the engagement stand, I'll put your father on his feet again. I'll—I'll do anything."

"How put him on his feet? I thought he was smashed."

"He went to Chicago to raise a lot of money. He couldn't. He's coming back to face the music. It's a funeral march, unless, unless—well, I could take up his obligations. I don't understand it very well myself, to say nothing of explaining it to you. But I've got a lot of money, and money is what your father's enemies want. He'll be all right if he's tided over the hard places. So for my sake and your governor's—let me announce the engagement."

"Think what people would say. It

looks so hideously mercenary on my part."

"We can prove that we were engaged before this thing threatened. Everybody will have to confess it's a true love match on both sides. Please! please, Persis! pretty please!"

She resigned herself to all the shames she foresaw and sighed:

"All right, Willie; it will brace Dad up a bit."

"Is he the only one you think of?" Willie pouted. "Haven't you a word of—of love for me?" He wrung her hand in his little claws again and they set her nerves on edge. She wanted to shriek her detestation of her plight, but she controlled herself enough to keep her feelings back. She could not, however, mimic love where she felt loathing. The best she could do was to mumble:

"We can't very well play a love scene up here before everybody, can we? I may feel more enthusiastic when I've had a bath and a change of costume."

She broke from him and hurried down the steps. He caught her half way to plead:

"Let me announce our engagement now—to the—the gang."

"Not now," she pleaded, "not here." And she ran on. But he followed chuckling. He had a great dramatic idea.

XXXVIII

That was an extraordinary dinner. The famished aristocracy hovered about the kitchen porch, like waifs, pleading for the privilege of assisting. Ten Eyck wanted to scour the cake dish, or put raisins in something. He and the rest were set to work dusting the palatial dining hall and bringing forth the best Enslee plate. Willie stood by and warned them to be careful, though he was in so triumphant a humor that he felt like breaking something himself. But he did not.

When at last the board was decked, the candelabra alight, fresh flowers lavished everywhere, and chairs arranged, they were ravenous.

"Do we dress for dinner?" said Ten Eyck. Winifred threw a boiled potato

at him. It grazed Mrs. Neff, who swore splendidly and was prepared to respond with a mop when disarmed.

It was one of the necessities of the feast that the entire body of guests should be also the corps of waiters. The service would have appalled the shabbiest butler. There were woeful collisions at the deadly swinging doors; wine-glasses that had been made in Bohemia and monogrammed there were splintered. A wonderful soup tureen of historic associations was juggled and lost. It fell on a venerable rug of every color except spilled soup. The tureen was picked up empty and badly dimpled.

But nothing could check the riot. There were battles around the serving tables in the kitchen and the pantry and at the sideboard. Those who got their plates filled rushed to their places like fed dogs dispersing, each with its bone.

Winifred was exhausted by her long day's work. She made no pretence of toilet, but followed her viands in and slumped into her chair with sleeves rolled up, knees apart and the general collapsed look of cooks.

Forbes had taken off his coat for his kitchen work. Winifred would not let him put it on again.

"My butler and footman eat with their livery on the back of their chairs," she said. "We'll make this a regular banquet in the servant's hall."

The idea pleased everybody but Willie. They had all happened into the servants' dining rooms during the meals of those weary ministers, so now they sprawled and gobbled and chattered in the best imitation they could improvise.

"Our own servants are probably eating at our own tables at home," said Mrs. Neff, "and passing scandal with every plate."

"There's the one thing missing to make this a true servants' soirée," said Ten Eyck, "—a lot of downstairs gossip. I am now Willie's man. 'Whatever do you suppose I turned up this morning whilst I was unpacking the Mahster's bag after his trip to Philadelphia—a receipted bill for five and twenty dollars for 'Mr. and Mrs. William Jones, one night's lodging.'"

Everybody glanced at Willie, but he smiled: "You flatter me."

Alice, with the sophistication that young women have apparently always had except in fiction, put up her hand reprovingly to Ten Eyck.

"No depravity, no depravity! Remember my young mother is present. Now I'm our second man talking to my maid:

"'My Missus, for all she's so crool to her darling dorter Aluss, do you know the hour she come in lawst night?—Nao?—Four o'clock this mornin': she did! strike me if she didn't!'"

Mrs. Neff smiled and retaliated: "Now I'm Alice's maid: 'At that, the ould shrew had nothin' on Miss Aluss. Whilst her mother was turkey trottin', wasn't the darlin' child after talkin' four dollars worth of baby-talk over the telephone to that young bosthoon of a Stowe Webb.'"

"How on earth did you find out?" said Alice.

Mrs. Neff's answer was a further revelation of the domestic secret service: "'It's a nice little colleen, Aluss is, and pays me liberal for smoochin' notes in and out of the house. And then the ould woman pays me still more liberal to bring the notes to her first. It's a right careful mother she is.'"

Alice stared in horror, and Mrs. Neff giggled like a malicious little girl. Winifred came to Alice's rescue:

"Now I'm Mrs. Neff's secretary talking to my little niece's governess."

"Help, help," Mrs. Neff cried. "No fair, Winifred. I had to discharge the cat. If you dare, I'll give an imitation of your laundress talking to—"

"I surrender," said Winifred hastily.

"Go on," said Ten Eyck. "As Connie Ediss sang, 'It all comes out in the wash.'"

Mrs. Neff put up her hand: "As official duenna of this family, I think we'd better change the game—or put out the lights."

"That's a fine idea!" said Ten Eyck, "a game of tag in the dark."

"Not in my dark!" said Willie sternly, with a calm incisiveness that surprised everybody and ended the project before it was begun.



Forbes spent his exile pacing up and down, smoking and peering in the windows where Persis, aproned
Forbes, whose mind kept



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

and wet-armed, buried her jeweled fingers in greasy dishwater. She was more fascinating than ever to
ringing the domestic chimes.

Ten Eyck complained: "We came here to be rid of the spying servants, and we've been more respectable than ever."

"Crowds are almost always respectable," said Mrs. Neff, "unless they're drunk."

"Everybody is almost always respectable," said Ten Eyck. "Even the worst of us only sin for a few minutes at a time. A murder takes only a moment, and thieves are notorious loafers. This talk of a life of sin is mostly rot, I think. Sin is a spasm, not a life."

"It's the remorse and the atonement that make up the life," said Mrs. Neff.

"Good Lord, how funereal we are," said Persis. "Talking about sin and spasm and remorse when the flowers are blooming and the moonlight is pounding on the windows. We ought to be—"

"—Washing the dishes," said Winifred, rising. "Come on, the all of youse: clear up this mess and get into the suds. Persis and Mrs. Neff and Alice are the dish washing squad to-night, and Willie and Murray can wipe them dry."

"We haven't had our smoke yet," protested Mrs. Neff. A respite was granted for this.

Everybody smoked but Alice.

"What's the matter with you, Alice," said Winifred, "—sore throat?"

Alice shrugged her shoulders and answered: "Ask my awful mother."

Mrs. Neff flicked the ashes off her cigarette: "My father always used to tell my brothers that tobacco wouldn't hurt them if they didn't smoke till they were twenty-one. I think it applies to women also."

"Great heavens," said Winifred, pretending to put away her cigarette, "I've ruined my life. No wonder I'm wasting away."

"Eighteen is the legal age for women," said Ten Eyck.

Winifred resumed her cigarette with a mock childishness: "Then I can just qualify. I was eighteen last week."

"Last century, my dear," Mrs. Neff cooed.

"For that you can scrub the pots and pans, darling," Winifred crooned. "And I was going to let you off with the wine

glasses! Another crack like that and I'll have you stoking the range."

"I am a martyr in the cause of truth," Mrs. Neff groaned. "Come on, let's get it over with."

Winifred was a sharp taskmaster and so bulky that none of the women dared to disobey—nor the men either. Forbes was for helping Persis and saving her delicate hands, but Winifred would not have him in the pantry at all.

"The little snojer cooked the dinner and he gets a furlough. If I could trust the rest of you I'd walk with him in the moonlight and let him hold my dainty white mit in his powerful hand."

Forbes was banished and spent his exile pacing up and down, smoking and peering in at the window where Persis, aproned and wet-armed and with a speck of soot on her nose, buried her jeweled fingers in greasy dishwater. She was more fascinating than ever to Forbes, whose mind kept ringing the domestic chimes.

When the kitchen and dining room chores were done to the satisfaction of Winifred, who demanded as much of her amateur scullions as she would have demanded of her own servants, they were all exhausted, and returning to the living room, sprawled in those inelegant attitudes that tired laborers assume. Their minds were jaded with their muscles.

"I never understood before why my servants are so snappy at night," said Mrs. Neff. "If anybody speaks to me, I'll cry."

"Pull down your skirts at least, Mother," said Alice.

"They're too far away," sighed Mrs. Neff. "And nobody's interested in my old legs."

Alice, with the fierce decency of the young, rose wearily, bent down, put her mother's ankles together and covered them with the skirt.

"Isn't it odd," sighed Mrs. Neff, "how we pretend that old people must go along to chaperon the young? It ought to be the other way about."

Alice was too tired to get up. She sank on the floor, and laid her head on her mother's knee. And Mrs. Neff put

out a thin white hand upon the girl's soft hair.

"It's a nice little girl sometimes," she sighed.

"And it would be a nice little mother," said Alice, "if—"

"Don't say it, my child. He's not the man for you at all. I know best. I'm thinking of your happiness." Alice shrugged a skeptical comment.

Her mother went on: "Do you remember how you had all the chocolate creams you wanted—once? You couldn't look at one for a year after. Well, living on love alone is like trying to live on chocolate creams alone. And he couldn't afford even to buy you chocolate creams."

Alice made no answer. She sat studying her own thoughts.

Forbes felt a sudden kinship with Alice's absent lover and beloved, this Stowe Webb, whose crime was lack of money. He imagined that Persis' mother had told her the same cold things that Alice was hearing now. He began to believe that many daughters must hear such financial talk against love from their mothers. He had heard so many married women scoff at love as a delusion. He wondered if, after all, it were man and not woman who is the romantic animal.

"Men," he pondered, "write the great poems and the great romances, paint the great pictures, fight the great fights against nature, and ignorance, and oppression, and poverty. They compose the great music, supply the demand for love-songs and love stories, and build places to love in. Then they lay their wealth and ambition and achievement at the feet of little women, and each little woman selects from those that gather at her feet the one that she thinks will dress her best and house her best and give her the best time."

He had read much in books, written chiefly by gallant gentlemen whose flattery was greater than their accuracy, that woman was a slave, a toy, a plaything, a victim of man's cruelty. Now he began to believe that in the vast bulk of instances, the reverse was true. The little women set their feet on the men's

necks and rode upon their shoulders and when they were displeased pulled their hair, poked their fingers into eyes, or abandoned them entirely.

He felt again what he felt when he studied Fifth Avenue and its woman-kind: for every woman's finery some man pays. Woman was the grasping sex, the exacting yet extravagant sex; the eternal feminine was the eternal calculatrix.

He had wondered what these women paid for what they got from men. He believed now that he had found the answer. They paid with their kisses, the encircling of arms, the cooing of tender words. In return for so much money, they paid with permission to spend yet more.

He studied Persis; how beautiful she was, how soft and gracile, how apt to endearments. Yet she held herself at a price, at a high price, and called it pride, self-protection. It was self-exploitation alone.

Yet what man ever desired an object less because it was beyond his means? Persis was certainly no less adorable to Forbes because he could not buy her. He would have to get along without her. But having once held her in his arms while she held him in hers, he would never cease to desire her. And like the father of a spendthrift child, he felt ashamed of himself for being incompetent to meet her demands, rather than contemptuous of her for making them.

After a while of silent meditation, Mrs. Neff spoke up briskly:

"There's only one thing that would rest me, and that's a tango. Where are those records we bought this afternoon?" On the homeward way, the motor party had passed a shop where discs were kept, and had bought up the entire visible supply of latter-day tunes to replace the dances of yesteryear. There was general agreement that it was high time to turkey-trot again.

"I'll run the machine," said Winifred. "Bob Fielding isn't here and I'll be true to his memory for a dance or two."

"I choose to dance with Major General Forbes," said Mrs. Neff, "unless he's otherwise engaged."

"Before we dance," said Willie, "I have an announcement to make. Ladies and Gentlemen, so to speak—" He cleared his throat and ran his finger round inside his tight collar. "I am about to—er—give birth—er—to an after-dinner speech—my first and only."

"Hear! Hear!"

"Some time ago Miss Persis—er—Cabot, whom you all know, did me the—er—unspeakable honor of consenting to become Mrs. William—er—Enslee. Circumstances rendered it—er—advisable to defer—er—the publication of the glorious—er—news, so to speak. But Miss Cabot has to-night given me—er—permission to announce—"

"I have not," Persis broke in, but Willie put up his hand:

"Order in the court—er! Anyway, now you know the worst. You behold in me the happiest—man on—er—earth."

There was a round of applause and Ten Eyck proposed "Three lusty cheahs and a tigress for the—er—bride and—er—groom—er."

Forbes felt as if a shell full of shrapnel had burst at his feet. Military instinct brought his heels together and he stood as erect as Dreyfus did when they tore the buttons from his tunic, and snapped his sword in two before him. He stared at the revel that broke out around Persis and Enslee. In his eyes it was a savage torture dance, and he was the man at the stake.

XXXIX

Forbes tried to smile, but his muscles seemed unable to hold up his lips. He heard much noise, yet distinguished nothing till he seemed to wake suddenly at finding Willie Enslee smirking up at him:

"You haven't congratulated me, Mr. Ward—er—Forbes."

Forbes seized Enslee's small hand and wrung it and said in a tone more fitted to condolence:

"I do congratulate you indeed; and Miss Cabot, I—I congratulate her."

He tried to look at her, but Willie was clinging to his hand and driveling on: "I want to thank you for—er—at

least trying to save her when the horse bolted this morning. They told me you were—er—quite splendid, and I take it as a—er—personal favor."

"Don't mention it, please."

"And now let's—er—dance," said Willie. "I will dance with the blushing bride, if you don't mind. Let 'er go, Winifred."

Winifred set off the phonograph and a blare of nasal cacophony broke from the machine, imitating a steamboat whistle, and then ensued a negroid music of infinite inappropriateness to Forbes' tragic mood. He saw the woman who loved him and whom he loved tagged and claimed by a contemptible pigmy, the accidental inheritor of wealth. He saw his beautiful Persis in the fellow's grotesque arms and her body drooping over him as if he carried her in a kind of burlesque Rape of the Sabines. And the music was not Wagnerian epopee, nor were the words something from Sophokles, but a romping ditty about:

'Way down on the lev-ee
In old Alabam-y
There's daddy and mam-my;
There's Ephraim and Sam-my
On a moonlight night.

Forbes felt Mrs. Neff's presence in front of him. Her wiry arms clutched him and danced him away. She was chattering reproaches because he had not taken her advice and captured Persis for himself. And her unwitting irony ran on against the words that Alice and Ten Eyck were singing as they danced:

Watch them shuff-lin' along;
See them shuff-lin' along.
Go take your best-gal, real-pal,
Go down to the lev-ee,
I said to the lev-ee
And join that shuff-lin' throng.
Hear that mus-ic and song.
It's simply great, Oh mate,
Waitin' on the lev-ee, waitin' for the
Robert E. Lee.

Forbes felt a ribaldry in the whole situation, an intolerable contumely. He watched Persis darting here and there as Willie urged her. The little whelp could not keep time to the music, and his possession of Persis was as grotesque as the

presence of a gargoyle on a cathedral. But the cathedrals are thick with gargoyles and life is full of such pairings.

For the second dance Forbes demanded Persis and she granted him the privilege with some terror; the look on his face had alarmed her.

The music now celebrated "dancing with the devil, oh the little devil, dancing at the Devil's Ball." There was a devil raging in Forbes' heart and something infernal in the frenzy with which he whipped Persis this way and that.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he groaned. "Why didn't you warn me? The last I knew was that you and I were to be married. And suddenly that—he speaks up and claims you. And you didn't deny it. What in God's name does it mean?"

"Not so loud, my love."

"My love?" he quoted. "You call me that?"

"You're not going to make a scene, are you?" she whispered, trembling in his arms.

"A scene!" he laughed. "Is that your greatest terror in life?"

"One of them."

"You intended to marry him and you let me kiss you! Were you simply making a fool of me?"

("At the Devil's ball—at the Devil's ball!")

"No, Harvey, no! I love you. It is you that were making a fool of me. I can explain, but I don't think you would understand."

("I saw the cute Mrs. Devil, so pretty and fat.")

"When will you explain?"

"The first chance I get."

("Dressed in a beautiful fireman's hat.")

"To-night?"

"I don't dare. Willie is going to stand guard. Seeing you dancing with Mrs. Neff, he was just telling me what a joke it would be to lock you out. He's going to pretend to go to bed. Then he's going to slip downstairs, lock the front door, and wait till you and Mrs. Neff come back. Isn't it ridiculous?"

("Dancing with the Devil, oh, the little Devil!")

"Everything on earth is ridiculous, but nothing is so ridiculous as I am."

"Don't say that, dear."

"Dear!" he echoed bitterly. "When do I see you, I say?"

("Dancing at the Devil's ball.")

"There's no chance."

"Then I'll make one. I'll—I'll come to your room."

"Oh, in heaven's name, are you mad? Or do you think I am? Mrs. Neff's room adjoins mine. She could hear the softest whisper."

"Then let Willie Enslee lock us out."

She saw that he was in a frenzy. He had the bit in his teeth. He would bolt in a moment. She thought hard and swiftly. Then she said:

"There's just one way. When I was playing chambermaid to-day, I wandered about and found the servants' stairway in the service-wing. It leads down into the kitchen. We could get from there into the dining-room and the drawing-room. There's a great window there—well cut off from—I don't think Willie or anybody would see us there. Listen for Willie's door, and when he has gone down into the front hall, slip out and tiptoe down the service stairs to the kitchen, and wait for me there. Will you?"

It was a nauseating rôle to play, but he was bent upon making a last appeal to her before they returned to town on the morrow. He whispered his assent to the elaborate deceit, and whirled madly the last measures of the tune:

"Dancing with the devil, oh, the little devil! dancing at the Devil's Ball."

And then he and Persis, dizzy on the swirling floor, reeled to chairs and sat gasping for breath. Mrs. Neff, passing on Willie's arm, urged Forbes to give Alice the next dance, and he obeyed, surrendering Persis to Enslee, who was so elate with triumph that only the braggart pomp of the tango could express him.

Alice was lonely and forlorn and so much in Forbes' mood that they were unintentional parodies on each other. Forbes remembered his talk with Senator Tait and feeling that Alice was desperately in need of comfort, told her



He flung her from him as something unclean, common, cheap. From the huddle she was in she whis-
-ness that nauseated him. He did not realize that she



pered: "I understand. I—I don't blame you." There was a sort of burlesque saintliness about her meek-forgave him because his rage seemed a proof of his love.

the whole conversation. If she resented the discussion of her affairs and her mother's plans, she kept silent, but when he told her that Senator Tait had vowed to help her defeat Mrs. Neff's match-making plot by giving Stowe Webb a position, she became a geyser of joy. She italicized every other word and declared herself insanely grateful. She declared now that she simply idolized the Senator, and had always thought him the most adorable of men in every respect except the quality of husband.

"I'm afraid he won't give Mr. Webb much of a salary to begin with," Forbes said, to moderate her fantastic hopes.

"Oh, I don't care how little it is," Alice panted, "so long as it's enough for us two to live on, if we have to live in a Harlem flat eleven stories high and no elevator!"

She made a startling contrast with Persis and Forbes regretted that he had thought her shallow and hysterical. Under her volatile explosiveness was evidently a deep store of loyalty, as under Persis' reposeful manner was a shifty uncertainty, a terror of consequences. "Still waters run deep," was plainly as fallible as any other proverb, for very shallow pools may lie very calm, and very spluttering geysers may come from far underground.

But it is one thing to approve and quite another to love. Forbes admired Alice, but he loved Persis. He approved Alice as much as he distrusted Persis. But he loved Persis.

LX

There were not many more dances before Willie, in his new capacity of Benedict-to-be, declared for early closing hours and ordered his guests off to bed, warning them that the next morning the caravan would set out on its return betimes, in order that Persis might "break the news to her father as soon as he got back." So Willie phrased it and flattered himself that it was rather considerate and tactful to put it so.

When good-nights were said and Forbes had gone to his room, Ten Eyck came in to smoke a nightcap cigar. His

words were congratulatory, but his intent was sympathetic:

"You looked a bit cut up, old boy," he said, "when Willie, with his usual tact, exploded the news of his marriage. I hope you weren't hit too hard. I warned you, you know."

"I know," said Forbes. "I promised you I wouldn't take Miss Cabot seriously. I—I admit I was surprised. That's all. And it rather shocks me to think of so—so—of her tying up with a man like Enslee. That's all."

"It's her own choice," said Ten Eyck. "And it's a good choice. She can't bankrupt the Enslee Estates, and she'll earn all she squanders. Being the wife of Willie Enslee is not going to be any insecure, believe me."

"And the sooner she's married to Enslee and beyond your reach, the better for your peace of mind and the efficiency of the U. S. A. Get back on the job, Forbesy. You're too important a man to be wasting yourself even on a siren like Persis. I believe in sirens and I like to hear 'em sing, but they don't convince me one little minute, and I drop anchor at a safe distance from the reef. Promise me you won't let Persis haunt you. Get yourself a pretty canary and forget the siren, eh what?"

"That's the best of advice," Forbes assented.

He thought that he sounded convinced, but Ten Eyck shook his head and masked a sigh as a yawn.

"Am I as deadly as all that? And Papa always told me that the man who gives the best of advice might better have saved his breath for blowing out his candle. Instead of more advice, I will now do so. Good-night!"

And he closed his door.

Forbes knew that Ten Eyck was right and told himself so. He told himself that common decency, self-respect, Persis-respect, and respect for the rights of a host and a *fiancé* forbade him to keep tryst with Persis. And having resolved that the one thing he ought not to do was to sneak down the servants' stairs, he sneaked down the servants' stairs—after he had put out his light, opened his door delicately and waited till he heard

Enslee open his door and tiptoe down to the entrance hall.

As Forbes waited in that least poetic of bowers, the kitchen, he felt like a thief. He had abundant time for pondering what a destroyer of dignity love is. Persis came at last so silently and so vaguely through the moonlight that he could hardly believe her to be more than a phantom.

But she gave him a hand that was warm and human, and when he caught her in his arms and she yielded rather than struggle, her body was as real as rose-leaves and lilies—a delight to his embrace, and her cheek such a sweetmeat to his lips that he dismissed all scruples as follies beneath contempt.

When she had extricated herself from his clasp, she took his hand and led him through the butler's pantry, and its swinging door, across the moonlit dining-room, through a majestic, somber portal into a cave of black gloom, which was the salon.

"Have you a match?" she whispered. "If you haven't, I have."

"I have a cigar-lighter."

He snapped the little engine and a small blue flame threw a sickly light that helped them to find a channel through the islands of chairs and divans and tables to the lofty hangings masking the windows.

The wee taper gave Forbes a glimpse as well of the place he was in.

This superb chamber had not been opened to the present guests. It was still in its winter-garb, the portraits in shrouds, and chairs and tables disguised in winding sheets. There was a hint of a mortuary vault about the place. The walls were of Istrian stone hung with gray tapestries of unhappy loves. The floor was of marble devoid of rugs—they were rolled up against the walls like mummies. The mantel was a carved structure brought bodily from an old Italian palace. In this dull light it might have been a funeral monument. Noises seemed to be repeated here with spooky comment, and to Forbes the spirit in the air was ominous.

Persis knew the room well, and remembered it as she had first seen it,

glowing with color, flooded with sunlight and crowded with gorgeous people; she did not feel the oppression that weighed on Forbes.

To her it was a clandestine romance—the sort of poetic encounter she had read about in ever so many books. Her heart was beating with terror of discovery and ecstasy of adventure. When she gained the window she reached up and persuaded the hangings back on gently clashing rings. A well of moonlight was revealed—a broad, padded seat in front of a great mullioned window. Within the window was a smaller window and she swung this back.

Into the dreary air of the unvisited room flowed a little brook of perfumed breeze scented with the lilacs it streamed across. It shook with all gentleness the hair about her face and the soft lace around her throat. For now she was not in boyish riding duds with collar and cravat, but in the exquisite trifle of a silken house gown she had put on for dinner.

She was so beautiful in Forbes' eyes that the very faults he had found in her seemed to enhance her. The absence of utility and reliability and other homely virtues seemed to leave her the unmarred unity of futile, fragile loveliness. But this was the fantasy of the moment only. She had no sooner spoken than she was committed to something more than a vision for the eyes.

She smiled at him and he gathered her up into his arms once more and gave and took a blindly sweet kiss from her smiling lips.

When he released her from his constraint she sighed luxuriously:

"Well, Harvey, it seems as if all the happiness in the world had to be sneaked, doesn't it?"

Instantly he realized again the dishonesty of their communion.

"Is that your creed?" he groaned.

"It's my experience. Stolen fruit—"

"I hate stolen fruit. I want to have the right to own—you."

"You do—pretty nearly."

"I want everybody to know it. I want you to be my wife. It's not too late, if you love me."

"Oh, there's no question of that, for I do love you. You are—it's funny how hard it is to find new expressions for anything you really mean, isn't it? All I can think of is the same old comic paper line: you are the only man I ever loved. But—oh, Lord, if you only had a little more money! For I sha'n't have any, Harvey. My father can't give me any. I've just found that out. He can't get enough to save himself. I can get enough for us both if I take Willie."

"It's horrible talk, Harvey, but it's business. It's for your sake as much as mine. If I married you, I'd drive you mad. I'd rather have you hate me lovingly as you do now, than have you hate me loathingly as you would if I became a millstone round your neck. You'd be faithful and work hard and try to love me, but I'd be simply unendurable."

"My brother—you haven't met him; he's loafing through college—he knows more about sports than he does about books. He's always talking about prize fighters and class. He's always telling about some poor fellow getting knocked senseless because he strayed out of his class. I remember one brilliant welter-weight champion who lasted only one round with a broken-down heavyweight. My brother said he got what was coming to him because he hadn't intelligence enough to stay where he belonged. I'm trying to do that. I'm horribly tempted just to fling everything to the winds and run away with you. I'm starving for your love. My heart says, 'Put love before everything else—'"

"Obey your heart!" Forbes broke in at last. She shook her head:

"But my brain says, 'Think of the long, long future.' A woman spends so little of her married life with her husband. It's the long days that count, the days she spends with other women, with rivalries, jealousies, with economy, economy, economy. That's what I'm afraid of. Economy would play the devil with me, Harvey. I'm afraid of it."

"So you will marry this rich man. And then?"

"Then I shall probably learn to hate him."

"And to love somebody else?"

"I shall never love anybody but you, Harvey. I've never told anybody else my real mind as I have you, for I am trained to conceal—always to conceal."

"But don't conceal from yourself the failure you are going to make of your life. No woman can play false to her heart and prosper. I beg you not to despise my love."

"Despise your love!" she cried. "It's myself I despise. Ah, Harvey, try to understand me."

"I can't. I can only warn you."

"Oh, don't warn me! Don't lecture me! Just love me. Let's not think of the future—it's always full of tragedy. If we married in all our love, we should meet so much unhappiness—the most loving love-matches I've known have burned out—ended in divorce and open scandal, or scandal concealed like ostriches for everybody to see and laugh at. Two people fall in love and meet opposition and run away together to a preacher; then they have nobody to oppose them, so they oppose each other; and by and by they run away from each other and don't meet till they get to a divorce court."

"And you think that you will escape that by marrying without love?"

"Yes, because I don't expect love. I sha'n't expect Willie to be a romantic saint, and then hate him for not living up to my specifications."

"But your self—you will give that to him?"

She closed her eyes and turned ghastly white as she whispered: "I suppose so. That's the usual price a woman pays, isn't it?"

He flung her from him as something unclean, common, cheap.

From the huddle she was in, she whispered:

"I understand. I—I don't blame you."

There was a sort of burlesque saintliness about her meekness that nauseated him. He did not realize that she forgave him because his rage seemed a proof of his love. She would have forgiven him with bruised lips if he had struck her in the face.

He loathed himself for his vicious wrath, but he almost loathed her more

for compelling it. Yet when she got to her feet and stood clinging to the velvet curtain, and mumbled:

"It was better that this happened before we were married, wasn't it? And now that you are cured of loving me, I may go, mayn't I?"

He stared at her; his lips parted to utter words he could not find; he put out his hands and she went back to his arms. And she cried a little—not forgetting even in her grief to sob stealthily, lest some one hear. And he understood that too, and hated her for her eternal vigilance. Even while he kissed the brackish tears from her cheeks and eyes, he hated her for being so beautiful, and so wise, so full of passion and so discreet.

She wept but a little while and then she was quiet, reclining against him in silence, and meditating.

And he pondered the mystery of his own behavior. The sense of duty and sense of honor had always guided his acts hitherto. This woman acted upon both like the drug that doctors use for controlling violent patients such as the criminal insane. It leaves the senses all alive but annuls the power of motion.

Here he was, convinced to the very depths of his soul that it was abominable to embrace the betrothed of another, yet he did not take his arms from about her, he did not put her away from him. Instead, he held her fast even when she made to go. And yet he had blamed her.

This much at least he accomplished in the long silence. He ceased to blame Persis and accused himself, tried himself before the tribunal of his own soul, and denounced himself as guilty of treason to himself and her and the laws of the world. But he did not put her from him.

And now having condemned himself, he followed the usual program, and forgave himself. He bent down and kissed her forehead and her hair and tightened his arms about her. She did not answer his kiss. Once more he felt as in the sunlight by the brook, that he held only the shell of her, while her soul—that other man's soul of her—was gone voyaging.

But now it was in the cold of night,

in the dark chill of a room long closed up like a grave, and her body was the only warmth in the room, or in the world, for him. It seemed to glow like an ember breathing rosily in ashes.

And now gradually desire grew imperious, the angry, sullen desire of *Tristan* seeing his *Isolde* given to another man to wife. He burned with resentment at the ill-treatment accorded him by the Fates, who saved his love and her love for this mockery, this money-infected, money-paralyzed romance. His wrath rose in revolt against a world where such a sarcasm was possible. The laws of the world became suspect with the mercy of the world. The pangs of disprized love were so bitter that he began to claim revenge, revenge especially on her.

He clenched his arms about her with a new and different ardor—no longer the sacred fervor of a lover who protects his affianced from himself, but the outlaw that raids and desecrates.

She understood and was afraid and fought against him; but her mutinous love fought for him, and nature, and the moonlight and the scented breeze purring at the window fought for him, and all her beauty clamored to surrender. She was already lost, when some last impulse of horror cried out against the irreparable profanation. Even as her arms went round him, she murmured:

"Help me! Harvey, help me!"

XLI

In the panic of her soul, there was honor enough awake to raise that prayer, and in the fury of his there was honor enough left to answer it. It was the one irresistible appeal she could have made—the cry of "Help," that never falls in vain on the ears of a man, unless he has become a beast—or a god.

Mysteriously the almost stifled cry released from the dungeon of Forbes' soul all the powers of decency; they took possession of him anew. His senses and his muscles obeyed and he was now so pure-hearted a defender of Persis' integrity that he resisted even the little moan of almost regret that escaped her tormented soul.

Willie Enslee, exhausted by his vigil, had fallen asleep on a sumptuous divan. The divan had come from a palace and Willie's pajamas were of silk and his bathrobe was of brocaded silk. Forbes was impelled to taunt Persis with a whispered: "There is your husband. Go to him!"



The aftermath of the ordeal was an age of reaction. The blood seemed to flow backward into her heart. She was overwhelmed with the terror one feels for a disaster narrowly escaped, and with shame for the realization that the credit was none of hers.

Forbes did not take her into his arms but contented himself with closing out the breeze that seemed to have turned colder now, and with wrapping about her quivering shoulders the heavy velvet of the curtain.

Whatever other flaws she had, Persis was not marred by self-conceit. Even her nobler motives she tended to re-interpret from some cynical point of view. When she was calmer, she spoke with that intelligence of hers that always chilled Forbes' idealizing heart.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am, Harvey, and how ashamed. I didn't know I was so—so hopelessly like other people. I didn't know I could forget myself so completely. But I've learned my lesson; I've had my scare, and I must keep away from the edge of the cliff. We mustn't meet alone this way any more, Harvey. I love you too well, and I don't want to go altogether to the bad, do I? It isn't that I'm good; I'd love to be good, but I'm afraid I wasn't meant to be. But I must be sensible. I mustn't be a fool. A woman risks too much, Harvey. It's too hideously unfair. The consequences would be nothing at all to you—and might be utter destruction to me. I told you there were a hundred Persises in me. And now I have seen one of them face to face that I never knew was there. I've got to starve her to death. We mustn't meet alone any more, must we?"

He could not say anything without saying too much. So he simply shook his head and pressed her hand, and rising, led her from the niche of peril. With his free hand he found his cigar lighter and snapped the blaze, but the flame lasted only a moment and they stumbled through an archipelago of furniture, jostling together, and more afraid of each other than of any other danger.

They walked into the wall and, groping, found at last the door, and entered the dining-room again. The moonlight was gone and the first tide of daybreak was seeping through the windows. There was no rose-color in this dawn. It promised to be a gray day.

They hurried to the kitchen and came back indeed to life in its most material surfaces—a chill, drab light beating upon pots and pans.

They bade each other good-night and good-by there, but their embrace was appropriately matter-of-fact, galvanized ware upon cold iron. They tiptoed wearily up to the main corridor above.

Here too there was daylight like pond water. Persis went stealthily to the railing of the stairway and glancing down, beckoned to Forbes, who moved to her side and peered where she pointed.

He saw that Willie Enslee, exhausted by his vigil, had fallen asleep on a sumptuous divan. The divan had come from a palace, and Willie's pajamas were of silk and his bathrobe was of brocaded silk. But after all it was Willie Enslee that was in them; and he slept with his little eyes clenched and his mouth ajar. A cold cigarette stuck to his lip.

Forbes was impelled to taunt her with a whispered: "There is your husband. Go to him!"

But when he looked at her, she was so wan and pitiful that he could not be as pitiless as the wan daylight was. She was making an advance payment on her price; and she was shivering and lonely. So he kissed her icy hands and whispered to her how beautiful she was, and a sorrowful God-bless-you! and sneaked back into his room, his bachelor room.

Had he paused as once before to throw her another kiss, he would have found her with her arms stretched out to him, pleading for rescue from the vision she had seen and the unspoken taunt she had understood. But he did not look back, and she dared not knock at his door. The click of his lock frightened her, and she fled to her room like a ghost surprised by the morning.

The next installment of "What Will People Say?" will be in the February Red Book, on all news-stands January 23rd.



The Four Vaucaires

AN ADVENTURE OF THE GALLANT
COUNT SAROS AND HIS KING

By L. J. BEESTON

Illustrated by Frank Craig

On an evening in mid-winter a certain hostess gave a *bal costumé* in Assila's capital. Now there was no man or woman outside who counted for anything, who would not have parted with his or her eyebrows for an invitation, because this ball was really in honor of the little Princess Danae, whose betrothal to Nicolas, King of Assila, was the darling wish of his country.

I was there—*moi*, Count Martin Valentine Saros. And if you will please recall the esteem in which Nicolas held me to his heart after my little affair with Ferdinand Rocco, that fallen star, and how he created me his master of fence, of high rapier play, you will comprehend that my name was scarcely to be omitted from the best social functions.

At the beginning of the ball a burning question trembled on pretty red lips and clean-shaven mouths. Would the King attend? It was felt that his appearance would strengthen immensely the popular prediction which I have mentioned. On the other hand, it was whispered that, should he keep away, then the Princess Danae, on whom all eyes were fixed, whose piquant little face with its timid, pleading eyes and retroussé nose and soft cheeks, seemed pale with some sorrow, must look elsewhere for a royal consort.

An hour after midnight, when the room floor, hard as stone, and so highly polished that it reflected the twinkling

feet of the company, was covered with sets dancing the quadrille, I glanced up and caught sight of a Spanish cavalier of the olden time, who was standing in a half-leaning posture against a pillar which was wreathed with white malmays. He wore cloak and drooping plume, doublet magnificently embroidered, poniard at his right side, and a forty-inch rapier with a silver-wire grip at his left. An almost glowering expression marred his face, which was tolerably handsome. Who was this gentleman bringing his private cloud into so much radiance? Well, you know my name. I was looking at myself in a mirror with an ivory frame.

But not for long did I regard that soured image. My gaze wandered away to where my beloved Katrine was gliding through the figures of the dance with a partner who apparently appreciated his privilege. It seemed to me that the unwed daughter of old Otto Thalberg made plain and undesirable every other woman in that immense ballroom. There was your true princess, whose dark loveliness deserved a crown's glittering glory. And though men swore that her heart was cold as the polar snows, as sunless, as mysterious, yet I would not believe it. True, she was chilling to me, and to-night more distant than ever. And although she had promised me the coming cotillion, yet it was a promise reluctantly given, a coin tossed to a beggar.

The orchestra began a Russian waltz, and at the same moment a voice said—



As I whipped around upon him he held up a hand deprecatingly. "I will tell you another secret," said he earnestly.

"The King does not hurry himself, Count Saros?"

A man in the garb of a Cistercian monk had appeared at my elbow. His cowl was drawn almost completely over his face.

I gave him a shrug of my shoulders for reply. He went on, in a low-pitched tone:

"Do you think he will come?"

"Monsieur, I never discuss anything with people who do not show their faces," I answered irritably.

"A wise rule," said he imperturbably. "How sad the little Princess seems this evening. A white rose has more color than her soft cheeks. Yet she looks very charming, with her head crowned with that beautiful flaxen hair so fine that it has the appearance of a cloud of palest gold."

I yawned.

He added: "Of course you understand the reason for her sorrow?"

"You credit me with a rare intelligence."

"You are pleased to mock, Count. But report speaks truly. The man exists, I do assure you. His name, as you must know perfectly well, is Othon Vaucaire. He has no title save his military one of a captain; but he has the best blood of France in his veins. Captain Othon Vaucaire, of a *corps d'élite*. The Princess Danae met him in his country two years ago, in the Saône valley. Love, to one of her position, is another name for sorrow. She has changed—she, who used to resemble laughing water under sunshine. In her eyes one perceives unhappy entreaty, a secret."

I turned with a sharp, "Monsieur, why do you tell me this?"

"It does not move you?"

"Not a hair's breadth."

He drew back, like a worm when you touch it; and the latent snarl in his tone was palpable enough as he said:

"There is no one so selfish as a lover. You have your own particular star which you adore, Count Saros. But permit me to say that that star revolves round another orb, infinitely more lustrous, like those binary stars, those double suns, which the telescope reveals, in the profound."

An offensive remark, by the great devil! All my sulkiness burst into a flash of hot rage. Here was a man who needed a lesson in one of Capo Ferro's time thrusts! But as I whipped round upon him he held up a hand deprecatingly.

"I will tell you another secret," said he earnestly. "Katrine Thalberg will give her heart to her partner in the cotillon."

"Wisely observed," I rejoined, suddenly serene.

"That pleases you?"

"The cotillon is mine."

"You are too late!"

Swiftly as I turned from him I saw that he was right. During the conversation Nicolas had made an unobtrusive entrance just as the orchestra was tuning for the cotillon. He was wearing a uniform of silver gray, with silver epaulettes, the uniform of a colonel of hussars in the country of the Princess Danae, in compliment to her presence. The orchestra hesitated; he made a motion of his hand for the dance to continue, and offered his arm to Katrine, who was waiting for my coming. She could do nothing more than accept, and catching sight of me as I advanced with more haste than decorum, with profound disappointment clouding my face, she paid my tardiness with a glance of disdainful triumph that went through me like a rapier.

Now a thousand curses on my interlocutor! I spun round again to find him, and saw him threading his way right through the circling crowd. He even crossed the path of the Princess Danae, who was dancing with a fellow dressed up to represent the devil knows what. But instead of resenting this rudeness I saw her clear eyes gaze searchingly into the Cistercian's face; and some motion or whispered word from him made her turn deathly white. He pushed his way through a curtain of fragrant roses, and I went after him.

I had had enough of that entertainment, and I was suddenly curious. I was in a recess where a jet of water plashed upon a grotto. A terrible draught blew in through an open door at the further end. My quarry had made his exit

through this door, which led to a terrace. There was a wild flurry of snow in the night, and a wind cold enough to lay bare one's bones.

There were footprints on the white covering on the stones of the terrace walk where stone figures stood at intervals, looking like ghosts in their shrouds. The footprints went down a flight of steps, along a lawn, into the park, where the trees were lashing back at the wind. Then they passed through a small arched gate in a brick wall.

We were in one of the boulevards of the city, and it was absolutely deserted at that dead hour, in that tempest.

I ran fast, for the Cistercian was doing the same thing. The wind-blown snow filled up his footmarks almost as soon as made. It was impossible to see more than three yards ahead. He went straight for the cathedral close, scurried through the quiet precincts, and into the poor quarter of the city, through narrow alleys paved with vile-laid cobbles over which the towering houses leaned in sinister fashion.

Suddenly I heard the sound of a door which shut so violently that the noise resembled a gunshot. Fifty yards further on, the end of the trail drew me up before a house in the middle of a lane so narrow that six men could scarcely have walked abreast. Wooden, gabled houses with balconies bulged from either side. I looked closely at the building into which my Cistercian had vanished. From a front window on the topmost floor a light filtered with a somewhat ghastly effect through a green blind. I tried the door through which he had presumably entered: it was securely bolted and resisted my efforts with the strength of a church pillar.

I crossed over and peered up at the lighted window. A shadow or two flitted across. What of it? They might be the shadows of perfectly harmless people.

I turned to the house behind me, which was in so feeble a condition that it was propped by a wooden buttress which went up to the second floor. It inclined at but a slight angle owing to the limit in width of the alley. I gripped it with arms, knees, nails, and swarmed laboriously up that splintered surface.

There wasn't a whole pane of glass in the tottering old house. I knocked away a few jagged fragments and climbed through a window frame.

A scurry of rats came from the dark inside. A rotting staircase took me to the highest floor. Right opposite I saw the window with the green blind—and between me and it a forty-foot drop to the cobbles.

The intervening space might have been that which sunders the stars so far as a leap was concerned. My only hope lay in bridging it. That seemed not impossible, for I had knocked against workmen's paraphernalia downstairs, and a long, stout beam would prove a good friend.

I found it after plenty of hard knocks against obstacles dimly obvious in the obscurity. I dragged the plank up the staircase, hoisted it to the sill of the window, and began to edge it over the void until one end rested on the ledge of the window opposite.

Easy enough. And now I had but to step across? Yes, with a wind, the breath of which was ice, screaming up the narrow passage-way, whining under the gable eaves, driving snow before it.

I climbed out upon hands and knees, clinging to the edge of the beam, flattening my body as much as possible, horribly uncertain whether or no my bridge would tilt over and toss me down through the abyss. I have encountered more pleasing experiences, believe me, but I reached the opposite window, finding my foothold on the stone sill, and pressing up against the glass.

The window was closed, but the light showed me a rusty remnant of the bolt which had once secured it. I must either open or retreat. I waited for an extra-fierce yell of the wind, then exerted a gentle but increasing pressure. The lower part of the window slid up. The green blind bulged inwards a trifle under the action of the draught.

Ticklish, you will allow. I crouched as much as I could, and listened, certain that discovery would not be long delayed. I could see nothing but the curve of the blind, which my fingers itched to draw aside a little. A voice came, quite plainly:

"Unfortunately, she has the heart of a bird. I saw it flutter to-night, in her white bosom—a poor, frightened heart."

It was the voice of my Cistercian. The encouragement was not un-deserved. Another answered him:

"True; but Katrine Thalberg is made of better stuff. And she will carry the bird, if needs be, in a cage."

I began to tremble. The enigma was beyond me; but the name of my beloved was clearly spoken. Said another:

"Bah, all that must take care of itself. We have done our part; the girl Katrine will do hers. When does this ball come to an end?"

"Within two or three hours of time."

"Grrrh!" That leaky window lets in the devil of a draught," grumbled one.

"And number four is still absent?" queried my monk.

"It seems so," he was answered. "Nothing has been heard of or from him. That proves the worth of our idea. He was the one, too, who was to come by the main road. I expect he has fallen. The three others are there. I have come straight from them. They arrived safely by the pre-arranged roads. I left them in the best parlor of the Windmill, playing écarté. They had ridden hard, and their uniforms showed it. The resemblance between them is quite marked enough to answer the general description of Othon Vaucaire. The blue dolman, blue tunic and red trousers are worn by each; and each has, on his left shoulder, a true lover's knot in a blue silk ribbon. It pleased their humor to keep their secret even from me; and I came away as wise as when I arrived. Tall, lean fellows are those Frenchmen, and each had his cavalry sword by him on the deal table. They will get fresh mounts at the inn where they are waiting, and they will make the way smoke. Come daybreak, the limited frontiers of Assila will be behind them. And to-morrow there will be a noise in the world!"

So much I heard, and at that luckless moment a sudden flaw of wind made the linen blind flap like a ship's canvas. I heard a chair pushed back, but the rasp of it had not died away before I had turned to the slender bridge, getting down again upon hands and knees after

a heart-choking slip which all but flung me over. I heard a voice howl in amazement, "*Mon Dieu!*" And certainly the exclamation was justified, for the sight of me edging that desperate way on a narrow, snow-covered plank stretched over a precipice, must have been thrilling enough.

There came the noise of chairs hurled aside, of a rush of footsteps to the window. I had but three seconds between me and eternity. A voice like a lion's roar sent a terrible oath after me, and then I felt the beam begin to stir. Had the fools thought of drawing it towards them, nothing could have saved me from being smashed to splinters, but instead one endeavored to turn it over, which was no easy task with my weight upon it. Still, I felt it giving, and half-rising to my feet I launched myself forward in the maddest leap for the window through which I had climbed. My crooked fingers got a grip of the sill, and I hung with my swaying weight upon them for an instant or two before drawing my body up into safety. Once through the aperture I permitted myself a look backwards. The opposite window was crowded with men's faces, white and menacing. I waited but long enough to pick up my rapier, which I had left on the floor of this room before making the perilous journey. And not caring to chance the front exit from the house, I succeeded in finding a back door and making a somewhat inglorious retreat over more walls than I care to remember.

Now I have no idea what construction you have put on the dialogue which I overheard, but to me it had suggested a train of thought which sent me straight away to Nicolas. I was in no condition to re-enter the ball-room; but a written line, "Sire, I have something to communicate to you," brought him to my side. One glance of his bright eyes at my torn attire, and possibly a certain wildness in my expression, told him that something unusual had happened.

"You bring an adventure, Count?" he whispered, with a delighted look.

"I believe so, sire."

"Well said. Wait for me at the palace."

He left me but ten minutes of inaction there.

"By Capo, your face was never more welcome, Martin," he exclaimed. "You have news? Stay! Tell me that your tidings offer but a mere chance of a little sword-play?"

"It is possible, sire."

"Out with it, then."

I told him all. He listened without moving his clear gaze from my face. And when I had finished he still continued to look at me, but his regard became more absent. Then he walked up and down for the space of five long minutes. At last he said:

"Your opinion, Count?"

Understand, if you please, that I, the King's companion in his beloved secret adventures, am the one man in Assila who dare speak my mind to him. With perfect frankness I replied:

"This poor, frightened heart which flutters in a white bosom is her highness the Princess Danae. Katrine Thalberg, who 'will carry her off if needs be, in a cage,' is, I greatly fear, a prime mover in a conspiracy which acts to-night, a conspiracy to get the Princess Danae out of the country with Captain Othon Vaucaire for escort and company. In brief, sire, an elopement."

I paused. Nicolas bent his head gravely, and I continued:

"The place of meeting is the inn called the Windmill, at the juncture of three roads, each of which leads to the frontier. Four horsemen, each bearing the name and general appearance of Captain Vaucaire, made for this inn some time after sunrise to-day. Three are his friends; the fourth is himself. They adopted this particular strategy in order that, should the scheme be known to our secret police, the wrong man possibly might either be stopped, or arrested, or killed. Presumably as but three have arrived at the rendezvous, such a fate has befallen number four. The Princess Danae, in the charge of the Lady Katrine, will endeavor to reach this inn—is possibly already on her way there. The fellow in the guise of a monk of the Cistercian order came to the ball to-night to let her know that all was ready. He dropped a word to me in the

hope of perhaps drawing my help for the scheme. This is the plot as I conceive it; and it has the merit of simplicity."

"And in a simple fashion we will deal with it," rejoined Nicolas. Yet he did not utter the words with a ring of eagerness, but re-commenced his pacing up and down the long *salon*, a deep line of profound thought between his eyes.

Suddenly he confronted me.

"They mean to rob me of my bride, Count."

I bowed. •

"Every good reason of state urges me to this marriage."

I remained silent.

"A pretty romance. I could love this Othon Vaucaire; as it is, we must meet him and his friends, Martin."

I bowed again.

"He tries to steal our lady. You criticised, this morning, my thrust in *contra tempo*. You shall see."

"Permit me, sire, to point out two matters: the part I played in the game this evening may bring about its collapse."

"It is not known how much you overheard; and then, these three swordsmen will scarcely retreat now. Vaucaire will stand the issue of it. He is a lover, and a brave man."

"True, sire. And my second point: we shall not be able to tell which is Vaucaire."

"That must be left to take care of itself."

"I am silenced, sire."

Suddenly his eyes flashed with the gleam I loved to see in them. "Be ready in fifteen minutes' time, Martin. I shall wear my old Italian rapier which bears the inscription '*Je visite le cœur*.' You know it?"

"It is very long, sire."

"But one must oppose length to a cavalry sword—that butcher's tool?"

"That is perfectly true."

"And one word, *mon ami*: regarding the Lady Katrine, you will understand that I bear her no malice in this affair."

"You are very good, sire."

"*Au revoir*, then."

I made an unobtrusive exit through one of the small oaken doors covered



I hesitated for an instant. Snow was still falling, descending out of mystery, out from the upper dark, in large white flakes which made no whisper of sound for all their multitudes.

with enormous rivets which gave upon the colonnades at the back of the palace. I had an almost unique right to this exit. A sharp turn of twelve paces leftward brought me to a very long alley-way where the grass in summer is soft as velvet, and the monstrous high walls on either side are covered with fruit trees in espalier. At the other end of this alley-way is an ancient door set in a stone wall three times its thickness. A small key operates a spring which turns the massive lock, and to this, also, I have a well-nigh solitary right. Outside, I hesitated for an instant.

Snow was still falling, descending out of mystery, out from the upper dark in large white flakes which made no whisper of sound for all their multitudes. I had but three hundred yards' run to my rooms, in a quadrangle over-shadowed by the great cathedral. A change of clothing was quickly effected. I did not hurry my selection of a weapon, however. To tell the truth I was not quite satisfied with the king's choice, considering the kind of blade we should have to encounter. But his love of the long rapier will not endure argument; and *certainly*—as the French say—he has the iron wrist for it, and can turn in a ring one of those five-foot strips of narrow steel which figured in many a tavern brawl in Elizabethan days.

The moment I was ready I darted out, every nerve tingling with joyous expectation of the sport to come; but in a second all that was shattered. For I was but a yard from the threshold when four men—two on either side of me—leaped from the shadow of the wall and tumbled me over in the deep snow.

In a trice I was disarmed and a gag forced between my teeth. I will do them the credit to say that they did their work in splendid silence and without a wasted movement. And there I was, flat on the snow, wrapped up in a coil of cord like a fly in a web, and capable only of emitting sparks of fury in wholly disregarded glares of rage.

A whispered debate among them lasted but a minute. They lifted me from the ground and carried me to where a yew tree, centuries old, spread its heavy limbs and foliage in the center of the

quadrangle. Round this tree was a circular seat. Time had hollowed a huge cavity in the body of the yew. They hoisted me over the seat and dropped me into this recess as if I had been a bundle of straw; and then, without a word of warning or menace, they vanished.

The whole affair had been but a matter of seconds. The sheer abruptness of it, and the reaction following my desperate struggles left me in a stupefied wonderment as to whether or no my senses were playing me a trick.

The slow passing of time cleared my brain in that respect. I was indeed awake, and driving the cords into my skin by futile efforts to break them. A husky gasp was all the sound which the well-placed gag allowed. Clearly I must resign myself to this ridiculous position, and wait for the coming day. Yet that philosophical attitude was altogether denied by my feverish impatience and fear of what must befall Nicolas in my absence.

I told myself that doubtless I had been followed on leaving the empty house in the alley, that I had been tracked to the palace, and thence to my rooms. No injury was intended; I had simply been laid aside from a path I had meant to obstruct.

I knew the King's way. If I did not keep the rendezvous—and already it was too late—he would assuredly go forward without me. In that case, being in disguise, he might well fall. Together, I should have had no apprehension of our meeting with those three swords at the inn of the Windmill. I know my skill, and that of Nicolas; three light cavalry sabers would never have got past our long blades. But Nicolas was alone; and to fight for his lady was a joy which his adventurous spirit would not forego.

So I writhed unavailingly, and breathed bitter curses which I could not forcibly utter. Before my queer prison fell the snow, in a curtain, a pale drifting wall, each flake a phantom whirled un-resistingly. With a deep, sepulchral voice the cathedral chime announced the death of each quarter of an hour, and the boisterous wind tossed those cries here and there contemptuously.

Nearly an hour had perished, and the

cold, and a sense of despair, were bringing a sort of apathy, when the figure of a man loomed out from the semi-dark. His motion was more of a stagger than a walk, and he subsided rather than sat down on the circular seat round my tree. At first I believed he was overcome by the cold, but some muttered words which escaped him showed me two things; one, he had dined, or supped, unwisely; two, he was Rudolf Heussler, that *maitre d' escrime*, at whose famous school of fencing I had met and nearly killed Nicolas.

Mon Dieu! of all men this was the very man for me. True, his head was thick; but then I would clear it! A hoarse appeal quite failed to pierce his befogged hearing; but I succeeded in drawing up my legs and delivering a vicious drive with my bound feet that shot him a couple of yards into the snow.

He was not so drunk, thank heaven, as not to realize this insult and the direct cause of it. He leaped up as if touched by a hot iron, charged forward, caught sight of me in the cavity of the tree, and had his hands round my throat before my gurgled cry of his name, and the indistinct vision of my face, told him the truth. The amazement of it cleared his iron head to a great extent. He dragged me out and bore me bodily back to my rooms, where I was soon freed. Then his questions started to fall over one another.

"*Cher maitre,*" I interrupted, as he rubbed circulation into my frozen limbs, "for two good horses, brought here on the instant, I offer you my undying love, and a hard ride, and the chance of the real game of thrust and parry."

His questions and his presence vanished the word. For twenty agonizing minutes I chafed and fidgeted before Heussler appeared with the mounts.

"Where to, Martin?"

"The inn called the Windmill, on the sunken road between here and the village of Neuendorf."

After that no word was exchanged. We labored up against the hard drive of the blinding wind. Toilsome, heart-breaking work on the high-road outside the city, with soft snow under us, and the mournful screaming of the gale in

the telegraph insulators. But after a mile of it the path turned off and began to descend a deep dip which soon developed into a ravine, where we were sheltered, and the ground hard, if rough. Fir trees became more and more thick upon the slopes, and finally left us but a mere strip through what was now a forest. Suddenly we perceived a ray of crimson light over the snow fifty yards ahead. This light came from the windows of the Windmill.

Within forty paces of the inn we dismounted and tethered our animals to a tree off the direct path. We had seen no one, and there was no sound save the somber growling of the fretted branches. More than likely the whole affair was over and done with.

I walked forward, keeping amongst the timber, and Heussler followed at my heels. I could hear his teeth chattering as if with fright. But he was only very cold—blue with the cold, with the reaction ensuing upon his hard drinking that evening. This deadly fault in him had troubled me more than once; and now it made me very uneasy on his account. He kept his mouth shut, however. Something of my intimate passages with Nicolas I believed he knew, and possibly he suspected one of them in this exploit.

The inn stood in the middle of a paliade of charred stakes, and its façade was almost flush with the road, from the opposite side of which we strained our eyesight peering through the open door. A horn lantern was burning with a smoky flare on a bench, just making visible a wide and shallow stairway. The room over the porch was brilliantly lighted, and a broken sun-blind by the window creaked as the wind flapped it against the stuccoed wall. I heard no sound, saw no moving creature.

A handful of earth tossed up against the pane brought no response though repeated three times. A sensation that something was amiss kept me to a cautious game for a couple of minutes—no more.

Heussler grumbled: "Have you no warmer work than this?"

"Ten seconds will answer that question. Follow me, and let nothing surprise you."

I went in boldly, inviting interruption by a loud tread. The place echoed as if deserted. I ascended the broad stairs. A beam of light from below a door showed me the room I sought. I hammered upon a panel. No answer. I turned the handle and went in.

The room was lighted by candelabra—four branched holders, one in either wall. There was another door immediately opposite. A yard or so in front of it was a small table. Two men sat facing me along one side of it, and one man at either end: four in all. They wore fur caps, long blue coats that came down to their heels, and across the eyes of each a narrow strip of black velvet—a domino-mask. Cavalry officers, with their slightly curved weapons, unsheathed, upon the table, the bright points touching. These men were as still, as silent, as if fashioned from bronze.

A dramatic surprise, you admit, and one which held me momentarily as speechless, as immovable as themselves. A glance flashed round the room showed me no trace of a struggle, of any disorder. Nicolas, then, had not arrived. On the other hand, the quartette had been completed by the turning up of the missing number four. Nicolas had made the discovery and had been prudent enough to keep out.

Well for me that I had brought along Rudolf Heussler, *le maître*. I heard him mutter: "These gentlemen are trying to frighten us!" And, indeed, I will confess that the sight of those four pairs of eyes behind holes in the black masks, eyes in which the candle flames found a reflection, fixed intently upon us, had a somewhat disconcerting effect.

"Permit me, messieurs, to explain this unceremonious visit," I began, in their own language of France.

Not one answered.

I went on, in a deliberate calmness: "One of you gentlemen is named Captain Othon Vaucaire?"

Still a profound silence.

"Is it you, monsieur?" I addressed the nearest.

"That is my name," came the quite courteous reply—at last!

"And yours, monsieur?" I turned to the next.

"It happens to be the same."

"Ah! And yours?" I spoke to number three.

"The same—by an unusual coincidence."

"Which extends, monsieur, to you also?" I faced the fourth.

"It is beyond contradiction."

"An ideal brotherhood, gentlemen!" I bowed. And as I lifted my head, somewhat undetermined just what course to follow, I saw the door behind them open a couple of inches, and there, framed in that narrow aperture, was the face of Katrine, which vanished instantly.

"You question it?" asked one of the four.

"By no means. On the contrary, you have whetted my appetite for truth. Will you have the goodness to inform me if there is more than one lady in that room behind you?"

"But if the information proves dangerous to you, monsieur?" responded one.

"It will be the more acceptable."

"Well, there are two."

I bowed again. "One is a lady somewhat dear to me," I answered in a loud voice meant for Katrine's ears. "I suggest that I could give you the name of the other, but that it would not be politic to do so."

"*Ciel!* I am thinking that you have asked enough questions. Your name, monsieur?"

"Count Martin Valentine Saros."

"And your companion?"

"Rudolf Heussler, a very famous *maître d'escrime*."

"And the meaning of this interference?"

"To persuade Captain Othon Vaucaire to ride away with—his brethren."

"And if he refuses this gentle persuasion?"

"Then I and my friend must add arguments!"

"But we are all Captain Othon Vaucaire?"

"Then I will argue with two; and my friend will persuade the other two."

"And you decline to leave without the privilege of this charming debate?"

"Emphatically."

"Ah! Then we may as well begin?"

"The sooner the better."

With the word I flung aside the sheath of my rapier, and Heussler did the same. We advanced three paces and stood back to back, in accord with prudence and the old Italian school which permits no antics, but demands the straight arm and the flexible wrist.

Then a very significant thing happened, which pointed out, beyond dispute, which of the quartette was the genuine Othon Vaucaire. For though the four of them leaped up willingly enough, yet one, instead of discarding his long coat and rushing to the business with the others, turned to the door behind the table and ran in with the obvious intent of reassuring Katrine and the Princess Danae, and possibly to carry them off there and then, while his friends covered the retreat.

So. There was not a moment to be lost. Unfortunately, my introduction of Heussler as a master of fence had given our adversaries the natural impression that his was the most formidable blade, with the result that while one attacked me, two flew at him with the wild-cat ferocity of the true French soldier when he comes to grips.

The fellow before me was jumping here and there, snarling, hissing, stamping, feinting, which fireworks my six guards of the great Capo Ferro met with a proper contempt. But I felt Heussler giving ground, so that at last he was forced away from me. His hard breathing rang in my ears more than the fierce rasp of the swords. Suddenly I heard one of his adversaries utter a cry of pain; the *maitre* had run him through the arm; but it seems that before he could effect a recovery from the lunge, his unwounded adversary got home with a thrust right through the throat.

The thud of Heussler's falling body, and his gasp—"I'm gone, Martin!" came together. With a shout of fury I put an end to the antics of my opponent by a *stoccata lunga*, the point of my long rapier entering his sword wrist and running almost the length of his arm. I whipped round with a lightning movement to meet number three before he could thrust me through. He leaped back,

fell over the body of Heussler, scrambled to his feet and bolted.

I let him go readily enough, for my business was not with him. A leap took me to the other door, which I hurled back. I expected to find the room empty, but the Princess Danae and Katrine were in a corner of it, in a frightened embrace, while the brave number four was standing mutely by instead of helping his friends. Yet seeing me run in upon him he plucked up heart enough to face me, when, as the devil would have it, I slipped upon the bare floor and came down with a stunning crash, rolling over upon my back. I felt his point at my throat in a twinkling, at the carotid artery. I clenched my hands, involuntarily drew up my knees, and was summoning into a hot glare such defiance and contempt as I could muster, when he just lifted from his eyes the strip of velvet and looked down at me with a smile.

He was Nicolas of Assila!

He replaced the domino-mask as I stumbled to my feet and followed him to the scene of the fight. The fellow whose wrist I had pierced was sitting up against a wall, and he whom Heussler had damaged was bandaging his comrade's wound with a couple of handkerchiefs, after having attended to his own hurt, which did not seem considerable. We leaned over the *maitre*, upon whose eyes a film was already gathering.

"Blood of Capo, this poor Heussler will teach no more passes," murmured Nicolas.

The word was as sad as it was true. I picked up the body of the dead *maitre* in my arms and bore it into the adjoining room, in which I had noticed a couch along a wall. An icy wind blew through the room; the window was wide open, and the Princess Danae and Katrine were gone. Freeing myself of my burden I flew to the window and saw a ladder lying upon the ground a dozen feet below. The fellow who had bolted had known what he was about, and he had bested us after all. I believe I was on the point of jumping when Nicolas laid a hand upon my shoulder.

"You are very zealous, Count," said he, with a meaningful deliberation.

I met his long, steady gaze; and sud-

denly the curtain went up and the drama he had arranged became palpable enough. He had come to the inn of the Windmill with intent, not to foil the conspirators, but to assist them, possibly. For in the depth of his heart was little liking for the suggested betrothal with the Princess Danae. The success of this elopement would secretly gratify him, and make supremely happy two hearts against which he bore no grudge, but rather the reverse. Ah, if he had but been frank with me! But the matter was so delicate, so full of risk, that he had preferred to keep me out of it, and even to let me think that he intended to checkmate Vaucaire.

All this flashed upon me as I looked into his clear eyes, which gave nothing away. And I suspected, and do suspect, that the harmless attack upon me on leaving my quarters was the King's work, performed at his orders, to prevent my interference. He had gone to the inn alone, possibly introducing himself as the missing number four, or—and it is more likely—as a nameless friend who wished the scheme well. And then he was doubtless drawn by a powerful curiosity to see this Othon Vaucaire, this desperate lover, his rival; also the game upon the board attracted his ever romantic fancy, and he wished to see it

through. And if any interference other than mine had tried to upset the pieces, I truly believe he would have fought on the other side. But Heussler and I had turned up almost instantly after the arrival of the Princess Danae, and complicated the play, forcing him clean out of it, doubtless to his intense chagrin.

I closed the window.

"Permit me, sire, to ask you one question?"

The flicker of a smile gave me encouragement.

"Which of those gentlemen was Captain Vaucaire?"

"By Capo, Martin, I have not the least idea!"

At that instant we heard a faint sound of departing carriage wheels grinding over the bad road. Adieu to the Princess Danae, who put her love before a kingdom!

Returning to the scene of the combat, I found, as I had expected, our two wounded gentlemen flown. And in the cellar I discovered the inn landlord, with a domestic or two, locked in: a temporary imprisonment into which they had allowed themselves to be persuaded. To their care we left Heussler, *ce pauvre brave*, whom hard fate compelled to exchange life and death passes after the wine had run red.

THE next adventure of Count Saros and his King bears the title "The Chapel of the Madonna," and it again introduces Count Ferdinand Rocco, with whom Saros fought so valiantly in the first narrative.



It was Letha Crosby whom Charley Schyller smilingly handed into the limousine

*A Story of Subtrahend
and Minuend—*

By IDA M. EVANS

Author of "The Back Porch of Life," etc.

THE return-desk-and-no-questions-asked custom inaugurated by our leading department stores has been another step toward higher civilization; it has augmented greatly the amount of peace and good will in the peace-on-earth-and-good-will-toward-men season. That, and the immediate sequence of the January white goods sales which follow the Christmas rush as tetanus follows the Fourth of July.

Did John get five *outré* scarves and six pairs of the lavender or green thread-silk socks that have come to be the national token of that Yuletide we've-got-to-give-because-we're-g o i n g-to-receive feeling? And John, being a modest bookkeeper, would as soon wear garnet buttons on his shiny blue serge coat. You—and he—are no longer irritated. Each sock is good for a pillow-case, almost linen, with monogram stamped for embroidering needle. Every scarf may be exchanged for a company towel and enough thread to scallop it.

A JANUARY SALE OF WHITE GOODS

Illustrated by J. A. Wilson

Irene Hallett, of the linen and white goods section of the Schaffer department store, knew nothing of the Swedenborgian relationships of mind, matter and results, but she intuitively aligned cause and effect with such success that the firm gladly sent her to Europe three or four times a year, and told her to use her own judgment in buying. Which was a tolerably high perch on the ladder, considering that fifteen years before, her coarse-leathered feet had clung precariously to the cash-girl rung.

As the last days of one year waited in impatient idleness for the rushing first week of the next, Miss Hallett thoughtfully crinkled her forehead, which was creamy white, and softly rounded like those you see on old

porcelain miniatures—the sort of forehead that you instinctively feel is accompanied by a tiny, babyish dimple-cleft chin. Instinct on this occasion made a miscue. Irene Hallett's chin was as dimpleless as a Doric column and it had the same curving elemental strength. After crinkling her forehead exactly ten minutes, she came to the conclusion that no valid reason existed for not holding a January sale in December. The day after Christmas sees the return desk changing misfit presents to cash faster than a cider press can squeeze apples. Why shouldn't that cash be turned straight around and back into those cash-tubes? Miss Hallett crinkled her forehead for five more reflective minutes, and then decided to move the next January sale forward to the 26th of December. And twelve months later, lacking three days, departmental rivals of Schaffer & Company amazedly read the advertising pages and gnashed their departmental teeth. Then they split 'phone receivers summoning their own white goods and linen managers to learn why Schaffer & Company had been allowed first grab at the idea. And the next year they moved forward their sales. Thus does modern progress volplane.

Late the afternoon of the third 24th of December after this advance, Charles Schylle, who had charge of Schaffer & Company's advertising, sauntered down the broad center aisle of the second floor. Schaffer & Company prides itself upon three things: its broad aisles; the stained dome skylight that filters gold and purple light from the eighteenth floor to the fountain and palm-trimmed center of the first; and the neat garb and the unfailing courtesy demanded of its employees.

Mr. Schylle was twiddling his thumbs in that worriedly idle fashion significant of a mental void which aches for pleasant filling. Blasédom lay heavy upon Charley. It hung from his shoulders, which, though broad and straight, still had that hint of forward sag which is the forerunner of middle age. It curved his mouth into downward lines of ennui. The ruby-and-pearl cluster pin which

gleamed from his mauve scarf like the headlight of a racing car served by its brilliancy to emphasize his depression of bearing.

The aisle ended in the doorway of a small green-wood-paneled inclosure that formed Miss Hallett's office. A small, compactly plump woman, whose blonde hair was grayly streaked, betraying the middle-age that her gay black eyes denied, was coming out. "Oh, the girl is simply inefficient," she said as she left.

"Inefficient!" scorned Irene Hallett. "Kate Luteson, that girl is what I call the riff-raff of pay-rolls!"

Miss Luteson, whose trim patent leathers stood two rungs below Irene Hallett's, laughed and hurried on. Miss Hallett looked up at Charley's appearance and nodded absently; then her eyes dropped to a sheaf of papers that she was tabulating. He waited, yawning once, until she snapped a rubber band about them, tossed them to a pigeon-hole, tossed the scribbled result to another, reached for a second sheaf—

"If you've nothing else on hand tomorrow, Irene," he said lazily, "let's motor out to Glenn View Inn in the afternoon—"

Miss Hallett's preoccupied eyes, which were too brown-flecked to be gray, and too gray-irised to be brown, widened in surprise. "I'll be busy all day." Her voice was snappily quick—like the whirl of metal cash-tubes. "My department works till noon, and in the afternoon I must inspect a shipment of napery that I'm afraid,"—irritably—"is not up to grade. And it is in the ad's as a leader, too. If that jobber has stung me—"

"You'll make yourself a rat out of his scalp—wont you?" he grinned.

Her abstracted frown relaxed into almost a smile. "No," she declared, "I wont. Any jobber that stings me I'll present with a bottle of hair restorer. It's their business to sting. It's mine to be on the look-out."

Charley chuckled. Then: "Well, dinner can be put off till eight or nine o'clock. And we can find a place nearer home."

She shook her head. "I may not be through till eight or nine. And I need sleep to brace me for the next day—not mallard and music. Signs point to a slathering sale, and this year I'm short of good salesgirls. Never knew so many old ones to drop out, and the new ones"—her eyes, wholly gray now, a cold iron gray, went past him through the doorway to a tall, slim girl sorting and marking towels at the third table down the aisle—"the new ones are more bungling than usual."

His glance had followed idly. The girl, looking up at the moment from a finished pile, smiled recognition back at him. She was pretty in a white-faced and slovenly style. At one glance you admired big blue eyes fringed with tawny brown, wondered uneasily when the loose knot of light hair would carry out its patent threat of tumbling, and wished, in annoyance, that she would tuck up wisps dangling over each ear, and tuck down a black sateen waist that bulged sloppily above her belt, instead of lying flat according to the canons of trigness.

"Once you were new," Charley Schylle reminded Irene Hallett. His indolent smile included the girl marking stock.

"Yes," she acknowledged absently, her attention again focused on a sheaf of papers. But he refused to take the blatant hint and only leaned more comfortably against the door. His thumbs, tired of twiddling, beat a languid tattoo up and down his waistcoat.

"To-morrow," he announced pleasantly, "is Christmas Day."

"Yes," she murmured. Under the abstraction of tone trailed vexation. And presently she complained: "Some of the girls objected to working to-morrow morning."

Charley Schylle looked down at her meditatively. No untidy wisps of hair dangled over or behind Irene Hallett's ears. The softly waved black pompadour lay as satinely secure as the sleek breast of a mallard. The plaits of her immaculate white-laundered shirt-waist fitted under the belted skirt-band as neatly as the sky fits under the horizon.

Salesgirls looked enviously at Miss

Hallett, and wondered how she maintained that dazzling spick and spanness through the long, strenuous day. Cash-girls looked after her calculatingly, knowing that once she had been one of themselves, and strained the muscles of their small stunted faces trying to acquire her keen assurance of expression. Customers eyed her trim form wistfully, and speculated as to what make of corset she wore. Cashboys shot little furtive glances of admiration after her—such as they shot at the gorgeous case of gents' gold watches, aisle ten, third floor. Floorwalkers looked around nervously when she approached, and visually scoured the floor for straying customers. You forgot immaculateness of grooming when Miss Hallett's voice, which had the cold sweetness of a flute shaped from an icicle, wanted to know why you were loitering in aisle four when a customer needed attention in aisle two.

The employees in the auditing department looked at Irene Hallett precisely as they looked at the sixth crowded street-car that refused to make room for them to ride home at night. Miss Hallett held that the only valid excuse for a mistake was inborn imbecility. Over in Berlin, Paris, Flanders, Marseilles, Dublin and other places where they store bargains for bargain-hunting Americans, many men, slick-goateed, sibilant-voiced, guttural-throated or blarney-tongued, looked very respectfully at her, and only once in a great while—and then hopelessly—claimed that nine threads of linen existed where actually only eight were woven.

Schaffer & Company looked thankfully at her, and patted itself on the back.

Charley Schylle alone looked meditatively at her. Once, so long ago that both apparently had forgotten, and so far down the ladder that each had every excuse for forgetting, they two (he openly and she surreptitiously) had visited an installment house and found out exactly how much shiny-varnished golden oak furniture you can buy for five dollars down and one per week. At that time Charley was getting eleven dollars, back of the gingham counter. Irene was on



"It's hard work Christmasing with other folks' kids when you want your own."

the sales-girl rung—seven a week. Subtract from eleven one dollar for furniture—or even from eleven plus seven. Then subtract rent, food, clothes, carfare, doctor bills for two people, and, maybe—quite probably—more than two people. Irene swiftly decided that there was altogether too much subtrahend for so little minuend. Charley thought that they could make the figures balance somehow. She grimly told him that the only answer would be the zero of misery.

Afterward, in the concentrated business of climbing up to a place where minuends were bigger, they forgot all arithmetic except that connected with Schaffer and Company's profits. Climbing militates against remembering.

As she reached for the third sheaf, Charley announced: "I'm lonesome. Everybody I know"—sadly—"has a fir tree for to-morrow, or a favorite cabaret, or a grouch, or an invitation to eat plum pudding outside a restaurant—or is working."

"That so?" murmured Irene absently. "I believe I'll use the big corner window to display those Battenburg bedspreads. And I wonder,"—she drooped her chin to an elbow-propped palm—"I believe the heavy cream lace would show off better against a background of dull mahogany furniture than against the light maple." She took up the receiver of the desk 'phone.

While she spoke, the slim, slovenly girl had approached. "Miss Hallett, shall I begin now to arrange that last table—the one reserved for odd napery?"

"Why do you ask me? You ought to know that Miss Luteson attends to such details."

The words were civil enough—according to department store etiquette. The tone was about as gracious as the buzz of a bumble-bee disturbed in a siesta. The girl hastily turned away. Charley Schylle's eyes rested upon Miss Hallett, talking snappily into the transmitter, with a curious light. Then, with a different but equally curious light in them, they followed the girl.

"Letha's a pretty little thing—isn't she?" he observed, after the receiver clicked back to the hook.

"Miss Crosby?" Irene Hallett's voice was a tonous mosaic of pure amazement, wonder, dislike, oppositive opinion and sarcasm.

Charley Schylle at the moment did not seem analytical of vocal inlays. "How's she getting along?" he queried placidly. "I'll bet,"—with mild enthusiasm—"that she isn't one of the bunglers!"

Irene Hallett ceased absolutely to be preoccupied. She sat very straight on her straight-backed chair. For a second it hung on the tip of her tongue to cry, "That stupid, sloppy, slovenly girl!"

But she didn't cry it. Along with the gritty up-wriggle from rung to rung, Irene had learned not to cry all that tingled that tongue tip. The learning had been hard, harder than the climb. In the fifteen years past, certain incidents had lashed the lessons into consciousness. Once she had huffily flung back, "You're another!" to a snarly-tempered head of stock who doubted her word anent a mislaid box of string tags. In the three weeks that elapsed before the small squelched cash-girl found another job, regret sprouted, grew and blossomed. Four years later she told a fussy, finical, fractious customer that a woman who couldn't decide among twenty-nine shades of brown satin in less than fifty-six minutes needed the services of an lienist. The satin was to cover a pin cushion. It was in July, when thermometers are highest, and department stores' need of employees least. Six weeks was the time that Irene, sullen-eyed, with twitching lips, spent in practicing penmanship on application blanks. And in August her mother was buried. Malnutrition, the doctor said.

So now, remembering that this was the girl whom Charley Schylle a month before had asked her to make a place for, she answered, "M-m-mh,"—that most inflectional word of the English language, which may mean so much or nothing at all. And she did not add that twenty minutes before, discussing the young lady with Kate Luteson, she had characterized her as "riff-raff."

Charley lingered a moment, then with a "So long," sauntered away. She looked after him with a faint—a very faint—

expression of regret. If she were not so busy— She liked Charley. Not in a way that harked back to installment furniture projects. Not at all. Miss Hallett was very well satisfied with her own "hall bed-room." (It was on the red-velvet-carpeted side-corridor of a high-priced apartment hotel, and its three wide windows looked down upon a courtyard so bedecked with fountains, stone and wicker seats, and, in summer, palms and trailing bowls of smilax, that moving picture companies paid for the privilege of staging such Eastern-atmospherized affairs as "The Theft of Mohammed's Sacred Sword" in its mosque-like imitation-marble recesses.) But he came first—a long way first—in her small list of intimates.

Down the broad aisle strolled Charley. He paused beside Letha Crosby. The big store was almost deserted. At five o'clock of the 24th, most gifts are well on their way to the delivery wagon, and folks are hurrying home to get dinner—or supper—out of the road for tree, stockings—or cabaret. And the white goods and linen section is never the most popular among gift pastures. So his voice, resonant at all times, came back clearly through the quiet.

"What shall I buy, Letha—"

"Say, ma'am! Where in the name of Jumpin' Jupiter are the dolls? I've traipsed through ninety-eight through-routes of aisles!" A big man, in the shabby blue uniform of the street-car company, stuck a face of bafflement and disgust through the doorway.

"Seventh floor, two aisles south of the elevators," Miss Hallett told him.

"It's a darned shame," Charley was saying with vehement sympathy when the man had stalked on. "A rotten shame! Making you work to-morrow morning!"

"Christmas comes but once a year—*Thank the Lord!*" Kate Luteson bounced in. "Between buying presents and getting presents and selling presents—I'm as drained of that good-will feeling as a grasshopper stuck on three pins. Irene, lend me five dollars till pay-day—will you? I have exactly three pennies left, and the 'L' has a nasty way of demand-

ing a nickel— Thanks!" She bounced out.

When she had gone, Letha Crosby was talking. Her voice was too low for the words to be distinguishable, but their intonation of complaint was unmistakable. Anger etched two straight lines across the creamy white of Irene Hallett's softly rounded forehead. How dare Charley Schylle encourage insubordination? She'd tell him, long friendship or not— The two straight lines crinkled into a perplexed group. The girl was pretty, in a way—as a nineteen-cent string of blue glass beads is pretty. But who would have thought that *Charley Schylle*—of all men! And what was he asking? What he should buy her— Then, through the puzzlement of Irene's irritation flashed a recollection of her own neglected buying. She snatched the receiver and called for the book section two floors above.

Unsystematic people might quail at buying a gift for each of eighty-odd underlings—of likely eighty-odd different tastes. Ungenerous people might carp. Miss Hallett was systematic, and she had a conviction that books are the quicksilver of gifts, that their plasticity yields to the uneven desirings of all dispositions. Anyway, if a girl didn't like to read, she ought to. So she ordered eighty-odd best sellers, ten different titles, sent down a typed list of eighty-odd names, alphabetically arranged, directed that the ten batches be apportioned among them, sent along eighty-odd cards with her name framed in holly to be inserted, and got back eighty-odd claim slips for the recipients to present at the pass-out desk that evening. All in exactly eighteen minutes. As for generosity—that had nothing to do with the matter. She followed custom. And it was characteristic of Irene Hallett that she quailed not at the trouble—which indeed she had minimized. Nor at the cost—minuends with her then were too big for such consideration. But the eighty-odd "Thank-you's," bashful, effusive or non-chalant, which she had to endure when she distributed the claim slips did annoy her. Letha Crosby's was effusive. Disgust limned the conventional smile that Irene

Hallett was wearing. She preferred non-chalance. Did the girl think that she had to toady to hold her position?

Late that night, while inserting mother-of-pearl links in the immaculate white cuffs of an immaculate-laundered shirtwaist for next day's wear (Miss Hallett never postponed till six-thirty A. M. what should be done at ten-thirty P. M.), she remembered, with distinct unpleasantness, Charley Schylle and "that girl." Men were men, of course. One didn't expect them to be walking editions of a Ladies'-Book-of-Etiquette. But if he must carry on a cheap flirtation—red blotched the cream-white of her cheeks—he might have enough regard for what's-what to stage it outside Schaffer and Company's doors. And she had *supposed*—the red flared temperishly as one of the mother-of-pearl links capered from her fingers and rolled under the rose-mahogany dressing-table—she had supposed that Charley Schylle was more fastidious than other men!

She recovered the frolicking link, and reviewed the coming day. After all, the napery was bought. If she was stung, she was stung. No need to spend an afternoon moping over it. And between courses at the Glenn View Inn she could intimate delicately to Charley that it would please her just as well if he didn't encourage her department to whimper at extra work. Glenn View Inn was an attractive place of gray stuccoed walls and red-brick chimneys, perking from a pine grove, with the lake in front. Just now the pine trees would be heavy-white with snow, the lake lashed into a white foam of beauty by the December wind.

It was twelve-thirty the next day, though, before Irene Hallett remembered any white but the trucks and trucks and trucks and trucks of sheets, bed-spreads at sixty-five cents and bed-spreads at sixty-five dollars, towels from the fringed three-and-a-half-cent-ers to dwarf army blankets labeled, "Turkish bath, extra-superfine," and table damask, real damask, nearly real and not-at-all real, that had to be arranged in a manner most calculated to soothe spirits lacerated by unwise Xmas-ing. And then energetic 'phoning failed to locate Mr.

Schylle. But when she came out of Schaffer & Co.'s side doors at one-thirty she saw him waiting in his long green and black car at the curbing. She advanced, smiling. So he had guessed that she would change her mind! She raised her muff to shield her face from the wind that whistled sleekly around the skyscraper's corner.

When she peered from its shelter a moment later, her smile fluttered from sight as pell mellishly as a table of twenty-nine-cent pillow slips marked down to eleven and a half when it is swooped upon by a horde of pillow slip-seeking matrons. Three feet ahead was Letha Crosby, slovenly, shabby. There was a glimpse of run-down heel as the girl crossed the pavement. And it was Letha Crosby whom Charley Schylle, smiling gayly, handed into the limousine.

II

At ten o'clock of the 26th, Miss Luteson halted Miss Hallett between the out-skirts of the sheeting and the ramparts of the table linen. "Irene, will you do me a favor? (Madam, if you can buy that hem-stitched table-cloth one cent cheaper any place in town, I'll make you a present of it!) I received five silk petticoats for Christmas. *Five*, mind you! And who in the land of civilized women wears silk petticoats any more? That's why I got 'em"—crossly,—"*they're so cheap!*" (Believe me, madam, you're making the mistake of your life if you pass it up! I warn you it'll be gone when you come back.) I took two back, and got instead the loveliest satin brocade corset you ever saw! It takes twenty pounds off me"—with a down glance of disapproval at her compact plumpness. "And I want to get the money for the other three, but I haven't the face to spring any more at that exchange desk. (Indeed not, madam! This is fresh new stock unpacked yesterday.) Take 'em back for me, Irene, that's a friend, and I'll do the same for you sometime."

Under the white plaits of her shirtwaist, Irene Hallett's shoulders shrugged imperceptibly. If she herself were concerned, she might chuck a gift to the

wastebasket, but she would not exchange it. However, she and Kate Luteson had been friends since the day of lowly rungs, and friendship is not sustained without occasional sacrifice of inclination. So at her first moment of leisure, an hour later, she did as requested. And as she wedged a way through the crowded aisles—Schaffer & Company's "ads" were juicy word-bait—she shook off the distaste that, like a film of dust on marble, had grayed the cream-white of her face all the morning—and, if truth be known, since one-thirty the day before. For when you are buyer and manager, and so have to stand sponsor for the purity of that word-juice, nothing cheers you so much as having to wedge a breathless way through customer-crammed-jammed aisles. By the time that she had reached the row of elevator shafts, and had straightened a barrette knocked askew and a jabot yanked awry, passed a smoothing hand over the crumpled satin of her hair and tenderly rubbed a gouged corn against her other foot, her eyes were snapping as happily as the beady orbs of a hustling Brahma who sees her chicks squabbling over five fat worms that she has laid before them.

When she stepped out of the elevator and started toward the exchange desk on the next floor, distaste grayed back. Letha Crosby was standing there. In one hand she held a book whose clean paper cover testified to its recent journey from a store's shelf.

Others besides Miss Luteson and Miss Hallett were feeling the day-after-peevisishness. Letha's pretty, weak face was unhappy. Myra, the salmon-cheeked, squash-nosed young woman who pulled the wires between goods-taken-back and your money-handed-back, was as lacking in joy of countenance as a faded maple leaf lying in two inches of cold November slush.

The no-questions-asked custom of the return desk has some seventeen exceptions: hair-goods, books, cold-cream, and fourteen others are subject to Myra's condition of temper and digestion. "This bought on cash or charge?" she demanded with asperity.

"Cash," said Letha readily.

Skeptically Myra flipped the leaves of "The Fraybrangers." She didn't believe it. She had excellent reason for not believing it—seven reasons, to be exact.

First, the entire Schaffer & Company was pained at the way folks—mostly money-short wives—bought goods on a charge account, and a day later brought them back, and brazened "Cash, of course!" with much superciliousness of accent.

Second, the head of the book section had telephoned down ten minutes before: "Say, for the love of Mike, choke that flood of returned books! If any more are brought back, I'll be as shy a job as an ice-cream cone in Greenland! All my Christmas rush sales have melted—and the buyer is strangling because he can't speak swearin' as fast as he can think it!"

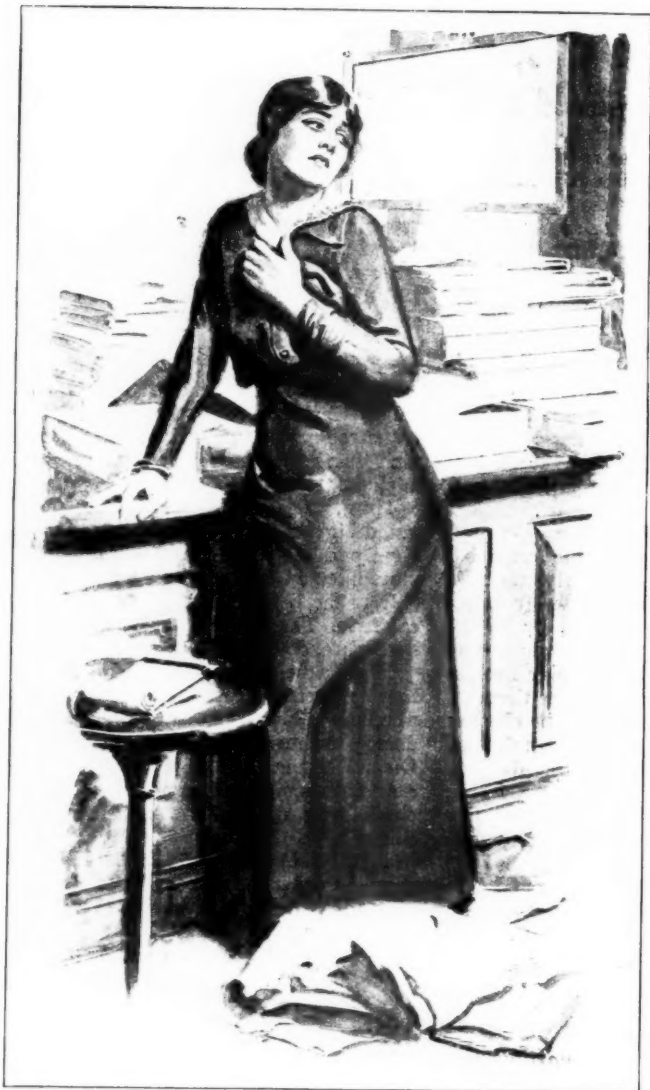
Third, Myra the day before had tossed big portions of turkey, mince pie, plum pudding, pickled crabs, preserved pineapple and candy into a stomach used only to the light weight allotments of a cafeteria. The mixture lay heavy upon stomach and temper.

Fourth, the gentleman friend who had been expected to produce at least a platinum dinner ring had produced—a dainty lavender-vellum-bound volume of Omar Khayam! And since he hadn't had the gentlemanly delicacy to inclose the check, how could Myra exchange the thing?

Fifth, she knew that Miss Hallett gave her department books. Miss Hallett always charged her purchases. A girl so audacious as to palm off a charge as a cash merited dismissal. Sixth and seventh, Myra decided that Letha looked like the very sort of girl to do that very thing.

"Lost the check, I s'pose," sneered Myra. "How do I know it was bought here?" Her eyes glistened as she saw Miss Hallett approaching.

"The check wasn't enclosed. I got two copies of the same book. But,"—Letha pointed at Schaffer & Company's red-rubber-stamped avowal of ownership on the paper cover—"you can see for yourself." Her smiling supplication was tinged demurely with triumph.



Letha, her hold on the sheets entirely relaxed, had dropped the armful.

Triumph to Myra in her present humor was like a spray of nitric acid in a glass of buttermilk. "I'll have to investigate," she snapped.

"How long—" Then Letha Crosby's query broke off. Her face grew pink. She saw Miss Hallett beside her.

this"—flipping "The Fraybrangers" toward Miss Hallett—"to her? Because if you did, and it was charged!" Omar Khayam and plum pudding inspired the vindictive lip-pursing that completed the sentence.

"She—she didn't," said Letha.

"Say, dearie,"—a stoutish, overly perfumed woman in pseudo-chinchilla pushed between Letha and the desk—"some jay sent me a copy of W. Shakespeare. A perfectly elegant book—aint those gold letters rich on that red leather? And I certainly appreciated the spirit of the giver—don't you know? But I can't make head nor tail of stories that have so many characters. And my eyes aint strong—my doctor, he advised me not to read too much. Thanks! And—which is the nearest way to the silk stocking counter?"

"How long will it take you?" Letha asked when the poor-eyed woman had swept on. Her voice was steady. But her eyelids drooped.

"Dunno," yawned Myra. "Oh, here's Miss Hallett. Say, you gave 'em books in your department. Did you give

Miss Hallett looked at her contemptuously. On the front of the black sateen waist was a clutter of spots—four or five, grease or coffee, maybe. The gray-brown eyes narrowed unpleasantly. A soiled white waist is an unsightly object. A soiled *black* sateen waist is about the unsightliest article known in these days of bar soap and naphtha.

Miss Hallett recalled that typed list of those to receive her books. The six A's and part of the B's had been given "The Darlings of Earth." The remainder of the B's and the C's had received "The Fraybrangers." Miss Hallett remembered the effusive thanks. Her mouth hardened. A girl who would lie might—do worse. And then Irene Hallett, with a generosity cauterized by the scorn in her eyes, said: "If Miss Crosby says that I didn't give it to her, why—I didn't."

Myra silently filled out a credit slip for \$1.18. Letha took it and, red-faced, hurried away.

"You did, too," Myra accused. "You're easy, Miss Hallett."

Miss Hallett's shoulders shrugged perceptibly under their clean white plaits. "Perhaps," she acknowledged. "It's immaterial to me if she prefers the money to the book."

"She lied!" sniffed Myra virtuously. "I bet she read it before she brought it back. And I bet now she's turkey-trotting to the junk-jewelry counter. But what else can you expect from a girl,"—scornfully, "that would wear *such* a waist!"

Miss Hallett was silent. But she wore the expression that sent floorwalkers scooting nervously.

"Much obliged," said Kate Luteson when she took the credit slip for silk petticoats. "Say, how did you like that pearl bar pin that Charley gave you? Some pin—huh? He had me pick it out, and believe me, I am some picker. No danger of such a present being brought back—huh?"

"It was lovely," said Miss Hallett composedly. Over a flurried, fluttering aisle of linen and muslin, she met Letha Crosby's glance. Each woman promptly looked in another direction. And in

Letha's big starry blue eyes—"Shifty stars!" mentally scorned Irene—lay shame, or its twin sister, sullenness.

"Some rush," grinned Charley Schylle about three o'clock. "Ouch!"—as a tall angular woman jabbed an elbow in the small of his broad back to clear herself a path to a table billowing whitely under a ton, more or less, of monogrammed pillow-slips.

"Yes," agreed Irene Hallett.

Letha Crosby followed the angular woman. She was laden with an armful of sheets that she had been bidden to "Hold a minute while I squint at these slips." The disheveled hair was more disheveled than usual. The black sateen waist with its clutter of unsightly spots bulged more than ever before.

"Miss Hallett," said a sharp old voice behind, "do you remark that girl's appearance? Doesn't she know our wishes in the matter of neatness?"

She turned. Charley Schylle had sauntered on. Old Harvey Schaffer was pouching disapproving lips at Letha.

"Disgraceful!" he snapped.

Miss Hallett agreed. And she frowningly watched the girl. Three times in as many minutes Letha looked up at the big round clock on the wall. Once while her eyes went up, her hold of the sheets relaxed, and a folded square slipped to the floor. She gathered it up listlessly—lazily, it seemed.

"Riff-raff!" murmured Miss Hallett. "That's all she is. I'd send her packing in a minute—but—" Her frown deepened. "He might think—"

"Say, there was an awful fire out north," cried Miss Luteson, hurrying in from lunch. "My, it's three o'clock! Time almost to go home. Terrible! A row of frame shacks caught fire from a defective flue. And one cottage was a—What do you call it? Where women who work leave their babies for ten cents a day—A *crèche*! Seven were burned—"

"How awful!" said Irene Hallett abstractedly. Her frown hardened to resolution. Letha, her hold of the sheets entirely relaxed, had dropped the armful. They cascaded to the floor. "Miss Crosby! You must be more particular—"

Letha Crosby did not answer. She stepped on the heap of linen—

"Miss Crosby!" cried Irene wrathfully, her eyes blazing at the dusty footmarks on the white. "To-night, you may—"

Miss Crosby paid no attention to Miss Hallett. "Where was that fire?" she demanded of Kate Luteson.

"Twenty-sixth Street—"

Whatever color the white face possessed drained away. "That's where I keep my baby—daytimes," she said. Then, stiffly, she walked toward the nearest row of elevator shafts.

The surrounding mob of customers loosed their clutch of towel and sheet. The hiss and buzz of the many voices died to a low, on-creeping whisper of horrified pity. Irene Hallett stood quite still. Kate Luteson drew a long breath that was aching near a sob. The tall, angular woman, sniveling nasally, hurried after Letha. Then all followed in a surge.

"Find Mr. Schylle," Irene Hallett roughly ordered a passing cashboy.

"Maybe—it's a mistake," Kate Luteson stammered awkwardly as the elevator swung down from above.

Letha Crosby looked at her dully. "I slapped his hands this morning," she said. "He splashed his fingers in his saucer of milk—and then grabbed at my waist. Milk spots, you know, are hard to rub out. And I didn't have time to change. And now—maybe his fingers—"

Irene Hallett turned abruptly away. She wanted to get by herself. In front of the door of her office, a pert sales-girl from the woolen underwear department accosted her. "Say, I'm looking for a tall girl in a black sateen waist, Miss Crosby—or Mrs. I guess—"

"What do you want of her?"

"She ordered two woolen baby shirts sent down to the pass-out desk. And she only left a dollar and eighteen cents. They're sixty-five apiece—"

"She may not need them—go away!" came thickly from Irene Hallett, and she hurried into the office.

The 'phone rang as Miss Hallett drew the green-paneled door shut behind her.

She took up the receiver mechanically. Old Harvey Schaffer's sharp old voice greeted her. "Please send that girl I mentioned to me," he ordered. "I want to talk to her about efficiency—"

Miss Hallett jammed the receiver violently on its hook.

But Letha Crosby's baby was not one of the seven. Charley Schylle came back an hour later with the news. He was breathing hard, though. He had looked at the seven. One mother, an Italian scrub-woman, had fallen in a heap—He began quickly to talk about Letha in order to forget the others. "Her husband was a young linotypist. I met him when we got out those first colored catalogues. He died last winter. She's had a tussle—she isn't one of the efficient ones. Christmas Day the *crèche* was closed, and she didn't know what to do with the baby till a woman next door offered to keep it. I didn't have anything else to do—so I took her home, and got it some toys. It was a cute little thing. I'd liked to have got it a decent bunch of clothes."

"Did you give her a copy of 'The Fraybrangers?'" asked Irene Hallett. Her eyes were glassily scornful—but their vision was introspective.

"Yes,"—absently. He re-iterated: "It's a cute little thing—but it is hard work Christmasing with other folks' kids when you want your own. I don't suppose, though,"—his eyes and laugh were wistful—"that you ever regret—do you?"

Into Irene Hallett's eyes, gray-irised, but soft-brown-flecked, came a look that women knew how to wear when the only white goods known were green fig leaves; when best sellers and return-desks were buried centuries deep in the future; the look that the pictured Madonnas wear under their halos and that gaunt women of tenements wear under poverty's anxious impress—the look of maternal love.

She unfastened a narrow pearl bar pin from her jabot. "I'd like to take it back, and exchange it," she said unsteadily, "for a ring, plain gold, eighteen carat—"

The Blood Stone

By H. de VERE STACPOOLE

Author of "Crimson Azaleas," etc.

Illustrated by John Newton Howitt



Magnuss
saw his
wife in
the arms
of the
French-
man.

EVINDUR MAGNUSS carried the mails twice a week between Reykjavik and Thingvellir. It was in the days before the mail-carts ran, and before the road to Thingvellir was practicable for wheels. He carried them on foot, for he was a gigantic man, too big for even the stoutest Icelandic pony.

He had been a guide in his youth and had saved money. He lived in a small house in Reykjavik close to where the Leper Hospital now stands, and there, with the help of his two sons, he engaged in the fish-curing business, carrying the mails more for the sake of exercise than the few *kroner* a week paid him by the Government.

The two sons were the children of his first marriage. A year ago, he had married again, taking for wife the prettiest girl in Reykjavik, Helga Olsen, the daughter of Helgi Olsen, the furrier and exporter of sheep-skins.

Helga had flaxen hair, blue eyes, and a laughing face—the latter a rarity in this country of sad-faced women; and she was the idol of Magnuss' heart. She followed him like a dream on his long journeys to Thingvellir, and he found her on his return a reality waiting for him at the door.

In Iceland the wild flowers are abundant; in the bleakest and most inaccessible places you will find them painting the dreariness with a touch of color. To Magnuss, Helga always seemed like one of these, a thing beyond the understanding, beautiful in itself, and more beautiful by reason of its dreary setting.

Reykjavik in summer is dreary; the eternal daylight of June shows nothing but the bleak volcanic hills, the vast expanse of the Faxa Fiord, guarded by Snaefel, eighty miles away, and the glimmer of the Snaefel Jokul like a cloak of glittering ice. The very beach

is volcanic and speaks, by the tongue of the waves on the black sand, of extinguished fires, and of the time when all that range of distant hills smoked and fumed like a row of torches and the lava fought with the ice and the ice with the lava in a war unseen by all but God and the Saurian.

But if Reykjavik is desolate in summer, who can tell of the desolation in winter, when the day begins at eleven in the morning and ends with the leaping northern lights at three o'clock?

The well-to-do have their amusements; with the setting in of the winter season a round of entertainments begins; there are quite good houses in the town and quite enough of them to form a small circle of that magic thing called Society; but to men of Magnuss' stamp amusements come rarely, more rarely then, even, than now, when two moving picture theatres give even the poorest an hour's entertainment for the price of fifteen *ore*.

One day in June, the *President Girling*, a French boat employed in the cod-fishing, put in to Reykjavik harbor, with the captain and half the crew down with diphtheria.

She had taken the disease from a village in the Isa Fiord and they brought her into the summer harbor to disinfect her, allowing the unaffected members of the crew to land.

Four men landed: Jean Carnot, Alphonse Courmeyer, Charles Guyot and Dirk Boll. They lived in the town at the expense of the company to which their boat belonged, until such time as a new captain and four new hands could be scraped together and the *President Girling* got to sea.

Courmeyer, Guyot and Boll were simple fishermen such as you find in the Icelandic trade, but Carnot was of a type begotten of the French Revolution and left by the Revolution as a curse to France: a good-looking, swarthy scoundrel with curly black hair, and great ideas of the rights of man, but none of the rights of woman—a strange character to find on a Paimpol boat and no favorite on board.

On shore he drew away from his fel-

lows, or, rather, they drew away from him, and, striking up an acquaintance with one of Magnuss' sons on the very first day he landed, he was soon a frequenter of the little house by the shore, where the codfish, split open and curing on lava blocks, looked from a distance like the washing of a whole village spread out to dry.

Mrs. Magnuss spoke French; a nurse at the French hospital had taught her. She was quick at languages, like most Icelanders, and though Carnot could speak Icelandic, he and she generally talked to one another in French, the language of love and cookery.

She made pancakes to perfection.

One Friday, Magnuss, who had just returned from Thingvellir and who had left his mail-bag at the post-office, found the gate of his house-yard open. The click of the gate brought his wife out to meet him, as a rule, but it did not click to-day, for, hungry and almost tired with his thirty-mile walk, he passed through without taking the trouble to shut it.

The house had two windows on the ground floor facing the sea, and to get to the door one had to pass the easternmost of these windows.

With the supreme stupidity of lovers, or perhaps because the fit had come on them unawares, leaving them no time to bother about trifles, they had not pulled down the blind, and Magnuss, passing the window, saw his wife in the arms of the Frenchman.

It would be hard to conceive a situation more terrific or more freighted with tragic possibilities. Magnuss had an implicit belief in his wife; she was the only thing in the whole world that mattered as far as he was concerned. Carnot was his friend; he had taken greatly to the Frenchman during the last couple of weeks and would have trusted him with anything. He, Magnuss, was a giant, capable almost of pulling the light-framed house to ruins on the heads of the lovers.

Yet he passed on, though from the moment that the sight struck his eyes he went unconscious as the dead, of what his limbs were doing with him.



Helga was the idol of Magnuss' heart. She followed him like a dream on his journeys, and he found her on his return a reality waiting for him.

He passed his own doorway, rounded the western side of the house, avoided a bucket that was standing in his path, and, having found the gate, closed it and there stood leaning on it and looking up and down the road.

The road that he had known since his childhood, the corrugated iron houses, the lava block walls, the swinging sign of Bergsen's shop a hundred yards away—all these held him and seemed questioning him in an unknown language about some terrible thing that had happened to the world, some catastrophe that had happened to the world he knew, destroying it, and leaving only a world of phantoms, things visible but unrelated to his present existence.

Then, opening the gate, he passed out, closed it behind him, and walked away towards the town.

The Leith steamer was just in and the stone quay that leads down to the water was crowded with townfolk.

Everyone turns out to greet the steamer and the quay was packed with people thick as herrings in a barrel. Magnuss mixed with the throng and stood staring at the red-funnelled steamer anchored a quarter of a mile away and the boats making for the shore. When spoken to, he answered "Yes" or "No," or more often made no reply; he seemed entirely absorbed by the sight before him, but in reality he saw nothing of it, or only as a man who watches changing cloud-shapes and moving waves in the abstraction of reverie.

Before the boats landed he turned away. It was his habit on Friday to call at the Edinboro' stores to lay in his weekly supply of tobacco; he was a great smoker, and, having turned from the quay-side, he made unconsciously for the stores. He reached the door and was about to open it, but no sooner had he touched the handle than he seemed to realize the futility of what he was about. He passed the sleeve of his coat across his forehead, turned, and walked off, striking this time in the direction of the little public square fronted by the Parliament House. Passing this, he made for the lake back of the town.

Three hours later he returned home.

His wife and his two sons were seated at supper, and Magnuss, having cast his hat on the horse-hair-covered sofa and kissed his wife, sat down to the meal. Usually dull and rather heavy after his journeys, to-night he seemed burning with mental activity. He was almost gay. Born of a race of people who for a thousand years have fought with Nature and suffered from man, Magnuss' nature did not lend itself to gaiety; it sat queerly upon him, but passed unnoticed by his wife, who had thoughts sufficient to occupy her, and by his elder son, who was not observant. But Bjarni, the younger son, felt alarmed. He had seen his father with just that brightness of eye and restlessness of manner when he was stricken by the typhus two years ago, and Bjarni, who was a dreamer and a believer in omens, had dreamt only the night before of the *himbrimmi*, a bird with a double black mark like a scarf round its neck, and always a herald of evil to Bjarni.

But he said nothing, and the family went to bed; and Magnuss lay by the side of his wife; but he did not dream, simply because he did not sleep.

During the Saturday and Sunday, supreme peace reigned in this small household, and if there be such a thing as the peace of Hell, one might have fancied it brooding upon the little house round which the split codfish lay drying in the wind and sun.

Jean Carnot called as usual, even when Magnuss was out, and Magnuss saw nothing, and when he met Carnot greeted him with effusion, and talked of their coming visit to Thingvellir, for days ago it had been arranged that Carnot should accompany Magnuss on his Monday postal journey to Thingvellir, to see the wonders of the place round which all Icelandic history centers.

They started on the Monday at five o'clock in the afternoon, Magnuss with his post-bag on his back and Carnot carrying the provisions for the journey.

Now the road from Reykjavik to Thingvellir leads past the boiling

springs where the Reykjavik women do their washing, crosses the Ellitháar, one of the greatest salmon rivers in the world, yet nothing to look at as it flows amidst the boulders of gray rock lazily to the Faxa Fiord; and Magnuss, after the fashion of a good guide, explained these points of interest to his companion, and Carnot, not in the least interested in knowing the number of salmon taken out of the Ellitháar last season, or the history of the boiling *laug*, still listened with a semblance of attention, partly due to the debt that he owed the married man, partly from French politeness.

He trudged along beside Magnuss, but in no very good humor, for the road is an ever-ascending one till the heights above Thingvellir are reached, and he was not feeling well. He had a sore throat and a general feeling of slackness, so that he broke into a sweat on very little exertion.

"*Pardieu*," said he, "I would think I had got the diphtheria but that I have no pain in the back."

Magnuss, who had been silent, broke into a sudden gust of laughter.

"Pain in the back," cried he. "You have no pain in the back."

"I said so," replied the other, wondering what this savage meant by his laughter. "Where is the joke?"

"Why," said Magnuss, suppressing his hilarity, "you will know when you get there and hear the story of the place, and it's enough for me to tell you now that a pain in the back was the common complaint of certain folk who went to Thingvellir in the old days. —But I'll tell you the story when we get there."

They were now on the heights above Reykjavik, and the road stretched before them, leading across the desolate moors.

On the right-hand side of the road and spaced a good distance apart, stood cairns of stones, each the height of a man. They stretched for miles away, and looked not unlike men. From each cairn a stone projected, as if it were a hand half held out. These cairns, built to serve as roadmarks during the snows of the winter, gave a completing

touch to the sinister nature of the scenery; they replied to the great desolation of the hills.

The ground on either side of the road after the first ten miles became broken and the grass showed scarcely at all. Ravens, enormous and black as night, perched sometimes on the heads of the cairns or flew across the path. Once they came on three ravens devouring the carcass of a lamb. When the raven did not show like a black blot on the scenery, there was always the melancholy cry of the whimbrell, a bird like the curlew, only bigger. The whimbrell fills Iceland in summer from end to end with its melancholy warbling cry.

"*Mordieu*," said the Frenchman, stopping and wiping his brow, "this is not a cheerful place."

"Oh," said Magnuss, "you should see it in winter, when it is one day's journey from Reykjavik to the Rest House, and one day from the Rest House to Thingvellir. Yes, you should see it in winter. But there is one thing you may be thankful for—you will never do that."

"Who knows?" said Carnot; whereat the other began to laugh as men laugh when a child makes a funny remark.

"Decidedly," thought Jean, "this man is a fool. I wonder would he laugh so loud if he knew?"

This thought, which lent a spice of humor to the situation, heartened him up. There is nothing that brightens the Gallic cock so much as the thought of its farm-yard supremacy. He laughed also, and his laughter set Magnuss off again, and Magnuss' laughter set off the other, and there they stood on the road amidst the gray loneliness, laughing like boys, a frightful sight before the gods in that desolation.

"Come on," said Magnuss, wiping his brow at last. "Once one starts laughing 'tis hard to stop, if the joke be good."

"It doesn't take much to make a joke in Iceland," replied the other.

"Ah," said Magnuss, "if you only knew what I was laughing at you wouldn't say that."

"What were you laughing at, then?"

"I will tell you later. Look! there is an Arctic gull." A huge, fierce-looking

gull was flying towards the west; its shadow crossed the road and Carnot watched it as he walked, till it dwindled to nothing across the purple gray hills.

It was now past eight o'clock, but the sun was still high in the sky, though its light was fainter than it would have given at a similar altitude in the south. There is always something of illusion about the Icelandic summer and its never-ending day. Real summer has never found her home in this place where trees are not, and though night holds aloof, one can feel her, still, watching, and her shadow mixes, though it be ever so little, with the eternal daylight.

As they went on their way, Magnuss continued, like a good guide, to point out the places of interest. Every square mile of the land, often every square yard, has its story, and the story seems always one of war and revenge. Here Flossi passed on his expedition against Njal; here Gunnar fought; here Hallfrethur fell; and you will scarcely find a peasant or a laboring man who is not acquainted with these stories.

They reached the Rest House at nine o'clock or a little after. It stands on the left-hand side of the road, a square stone building not much bigger than a cow-shed.

Here they had supper, and after the meal resumed their way.

It was half-past eleven when, passing the shoulder of a hill, the plain of Thingvellir and the vast lake lay at their feet. Though wanting only an hour of midnight, the world was bathed in the light of early evening. The lake and its islands, the hills far and near, the great lava dome which, in itself, is one of the wonders of the world, all lay wrapped in the silence of night, yet clearly seen as in the light of a September afternoon.

Magnuss, still acting the part of guide, pointed out the different hills, the hills that had once watched Flossi, and Njal, and Gunnar, and Snorri—all those men who were chief actors in the dramas of revenge and murder of which this land was the fitting stage. One might have fancied their ghosts stand-

ing about the gigantic Magnuss as he pointed out the scene of their doings, and, like the women of the Sagas, "egging" him on.

Then they began the descent to the valley till they reached that great chasm between the cliffs of basalt that leads to the river and the bridge.

"Look," said Magnuss, just before they reached the bridge, "this is the drowning pool."

Carnot came to the wall at the side of the road and looked. From the basaltic cliffs away to the right a thunderous cascade poured its water, which swept amidst broken rocks till it reached the bridge. Just under the bridge it formed a chute over a rocky incline slippery as ice and black as night.

The pool into which Carnot was looking was a by-product of the river; a pool, deep and silent and sinister, yet so clear that the rocks even in this light could be seen far down, even as they might have been seen in the days of Njal.

"And who used they to drown here?" asked Carnot.

"Women taken in adultery," replied Magnuss.

"*Ma foi!*" said the Frenchman, laughing, "it speaks well for Iceland that the pool is so small. In France or England they would want for that purpose the Thingvellir lake."

"So I should imagine," replied Magnuss, "from what I have seen of Frenchmen."

Carnot shot a glance at him, but Magnuss was laughing, and the sudden suspicion of the other was stilled.

"So they used to fling them in here?" said he. "In the old days?"

"In the old days," replied Magnuss: "they made many mistakes in the old days, for it seems to me that a woman, being weak and easily tempted, should be treated as a child, not as one would treat a ferocious beast, especially by man, who is, after all, the tempter. I have reasoned this matter out with myself, and were I a man whose wife had betrayed him, and did I love her as I love my wife, why—I would forgive her if she played me false, and if I



For a moment he held his victim up to the sky.

were sure that the fault was not so much hers as the other man's."

"Ah, yes, the other man?" said Carnot. He did not raise his eyes from the pool, but continued gazing at it with a slight smile on his lips, as though at some jest written upon the water and which he alone could see.

"And the other man?"

"Oh, that is a different matter," replied Magnuss. "But come; I wish to reach the farm I am going to before midnight, and there are still more sights to see."

Carnot turned from the pool and they passed on to the bridge.

In those days the bridge was made of stone. The stone bridge has been destroyed and its place supplied by a bridge made of wood.

"Now see," said Magnuss, stopping on the bridge. "Here is something even better than the pool."

He placed his hand on a stone with a savage angle that formed part of the bridge wall. One sometimes comes upon inanimate things that chill one by their expression of malevolence, and in this connection one may formulate the fancy that never in the inanimate world does one come across the expression of the benign. The stone upon which Magnus had laid his hand had a look of cruelty, caused, perhaps, by the incisive angle and its relation to the mass, aided perhaps by its darkness, a darkness accentuated by the smoothness of the surface. One might have fancied it to have been carefully polished by man in long-forgotten ages, a friction kept up by the sleet and rain of a thousand winters, to the tune of the wind roaring down the basaltic cañon and the wave from the howling Thingvellir lake.

"How, better?" asked Carnot.

"Why," said Magnus, "in the pool they used to drown unfortunate women, but here, on this stone, they used to break the backs of criminals."

"Eh!" said the other. "Break their backs! And then?"

"And then," said Magnuss, "they would fling them over. Look down and see what chance a man would have

with a broken back down there."

Carnot looked over the bridge at the raving chute of water descending to a pool thirty feet below the level of the drowning pool.

"Not much," said he.

"You are assured of that?"

"Certainly."

"And remember," said Magnuss, "in case of miracles, there was always a man ready with a stick or a big stone to finish the business; even without stick or stone, the man would sometimes do the job by seizing a foot of the criminal as the water whirled him round down there, and, pulling the foot up out of the water, the criminal would sink at the head and be drowned."

"One would think, from the way you talk, you had seen it all," said Carnot. "What do they call this stone?"

"The Blood Stone."

"Well, let us be going."

Magnus laughed.

A whole mine of uneasiness that had slowly been storing itself in the subconscious brain of the Frenchman was touched off by this laugh and the note that rang in it. He glanced at Magnuss' face, and then he turned to run, and was caught by the shoulder and slung round as a leaf is tossed by the wind. He saw nothing clearly and was conscious of nothing but deadly fear, and whilst he was whirled about as a leaf is whirled by the tempest and raised and lifted, beyond the terror of calamity came the chill of a greater terror—he was beyond the reach of man, in the power of gods that knew not man. For Magnuss had gone beyond himself, and stepped back far away to the land of Snorri.

For an instant before the end, Magnuss held his victim up to the sky, whilst Carnot, grasped by the great hands, lay absolutely motionless. The next moment Magnuss stood alone on the bridge, staring down into the turmoil of the waters far below. The cry of a whimbrell, disturbed by the presence of man, was the only sound in all that vast valley across which the silent hills gazed as they had gazed in the time of Njal.

Those confounded little buttons in the back escaped through my fingers.



OUR BABY'S BATH

By CLINTON YORK

Author of "The Servant Problem in Our House."

Illustrated by F. Fox



DISREGARDING four or five pairs of projecting feet and knees, my wife Jane reached the "off" side of the open Walnut Street car just as it was once more getting

under way. Her abrupt move could mean nothing but "wrong car" to the watchful conductor. He frantically signaled the motorman, who applied the brakes with a jerk. The passengers, though eager to be on their way, stopped short by striking in unison against the seats ahead. Jane clung to a convenient masculine lapel, and called to me:

"Don't forget to boil up a new nipple, and be sure to put it in the boracic acid."

I waved understandingly. The conductor *clank-clanked!* And Jane and the Walnut Street car proceeded down the hill.

Gripping Jane's written instructions and the Holt book, I went confidently

back into the house for a morning's practice on our baby, Jane II, just going on eleven months.

Ever since the stormy departure of our elon twice-a-week washer lady, Lily Mitchell, we have been getting along without a laundress for the several usual reasons, and the inconvenience of a slack legal season down at the office has been partly offset by a certain amount of money-saving he-housework at home, hidden away from a prying world.

My particular job included Jane II's regular supply of clothes and the preparation of her daily menu of modified milk. It makes it easier under the circumstances to call the mixing and bottling "domestic chemistry," and when it comes to running the washing machine, if you are wise, you will pretend that you are once more stroke oar on the old raft back on Buck's pond. It helps.

For a week, Jane I had been expecting word from her sister, who lives in Ware, ten miles up the river. It was one of those cases that are mighty serious while



At 8:20 I proceeded with the mixing and bottling.

they last, but fortunately usually end with congratulations all around and "both doing as well as could be expected."

In anticipation of the event, Jane I had been putting me through a course of nursing for a week, and if the message hadn't come one day too soon—just the day before "Lesson VII, Bathing and Dressing"—I should have been fairly competent to assume command. As it was—do you remember that old motto in curly gilt letters on the Sunday-school wall, "*A little child shall lead them?*"

Jane II had had her 6 A. M. bottle and was quieting down for another sleep before her morning bath, when my brother-in-law, Burt, called us on the 'phone, and Jane I had to get ready to go. I followed her around while she got dressed and did my best to remember some of the things I was to do and was not to do. Not that there was much danger of my making a mistake. Jane had written out four pages of instructions. They didn't leave Jane II or me unguided for a single minute of the twenty-four hours. They were tighter than a Tammany harbor contract, and for details, they would

have made the specifications for New York's new court-house look like the plans of a portable garage. We simply couldn't go wrong. Besides, I had the Holt book. That was supposed to cover all extraordinary situations that hadn't occurred to Jane, if that were possible.

I kissed Jane I good-by and watched her take the car without a misgiving. I had Dr. Holt and Jane's manuscript under my arm, and furthermore, one or two little theories of my own were to be given a try-out. I have always felt that my wife took Jane II too seriously.

It being 8:15, it was necessary for me, according to Jane's rules, to sneak into Jane II's room on tip-toe to look at the thermometer. Two degrees either side of a certain mark indicated whether I was to take off the blue woolen blanket altogether, or whether I was to take off the blue woolen blanket and put on the pink edged flannel blanket in its stead. "And don't wake up Jane II." At 8:20 I proceeded with the mixing and bottling. That done and in the refrigerator, I took a two-mile row across Buck's pond and hung the white and shining result—the regular thirty-eight—on the line to dry.

Jane II hadn't awakened yet, and things were going like clock-work. I had evidently pulled a stronger oar than usual that morning, for I had fifteen minutes to spare before the rules called for Bathing and Dressing. Jane I had allowed too much time for the bath anyway. It peeved me to have her take it for granted that I wasn't to be trusted, and what's more, I could never see why she herself needed three-quarters of an hour for the ceremony. Jane I spent too much time during the bath singing, "*Hopp! hopp! hopp! Pferdchen lauf Galopp!*" and the one about "*Bettler hat der Hund gebissen,*" to get done quickly.

If a person can't wash a baby's head and face and neck and be careful of the ears and dip the rest of it in the tub (elbow test) and pat dry, following up with a generous application of boracic acid and stearate of zinc, in less than three-quarters of an hour, including clothes, it's time somebody showed him

how. And Jane I had allowed me an hour and a quarter!

I lighted my pipe and went out to talk with one of my neighbors, Frederick Bates, who was sprinkling his zinnias. Frederick is a bachelor and paying teller in the Mercantile Trust Company. He is a mild-mannered, italicized, proper man and takes his position so seriously that the bank usually gives him an extra week's vacation. It is cheaper than nervous prostration and breaking in a new assistant teller.

Once, when Jane I had gone shopping, I had called him in to let him see me feed Jane II. Since that time, he had shown so much deference to my expertness, that I decided to give him an exhibition of a real American father in full action.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith," he greeted me. "How is Jane II?"

"Fine as silk. How are the zinnias? I am housekeeper this morning," I announced; "Mrs. Smith has gone up to Ware."

"Indeed?" Bates mixed awe and admiration.

"I want you to come over in about half an hour and try our new billiard table. I've got to bathe Jane II first, though."

The new billiard table, which we had ordered for Jane II, had arrived the night before. Jane I was opposed to it on the ground of expense, but when I argued that it would entertain Jane II watching us play and would be nice for her when she was older and was good exercise and only cost five dollars down and sixteen cents and six mills a day for a year or so, she gave in. But she looked over my last winter's overcoat pretty thoroughly first.

"Has it come?" asked Bates. "Well, I shall be right over. Do you know,

Mr. Smith, that there is *nothing* I should like to do better than to be able to play a *good* game of billiards. In fact, I have always contended that a man couldn't call himself a *gentleman* if he couldn't play at *least* a decent game. It's a curious fact, but the reason I cannot play better is *entirely* due to my friends. Every one of them is an expert and some of them are champions. Only the other day down at the Travelers' Club, Bill Howard said to me, 'Bates, you've *got* to learn how to play. Get a cue.' The trouble with *pool* is, it's too short. I broke, and Bill Howard ran off the fifteen balls. Of course he explained each shot, but it is mighty expensive learning that way. I shall be *glad* to come over."

By the time Bates had shown me his zinnias and had picked me a bouquet of nasturtiums, I found that I had overstayed Jane I's schedule. But a half hour is long enough to give anybody a bath if you stick right to it.

Bates had asked how much Jane II weighed now, and had made some offensive observations about the weight of a baby belonging to a friend of his. We



I finished the undressing with a pair of scissors.



We were all ready for the launching, when Jane II's protesting heels struck the edge of the tub and the contents landed in my lap.

hadn't weighed Jane II for two days, so I decided to take the time to get out the scales in order to give Bates her very latest figure when he came over. Besides, his friend's baby was a boy, anyway.

It didn't take long to get Jane II's clothes together—Jane I had left them piled ready on the stand—and everything would have gone all right, if Jane II had behaved herself and had shown a spirit of co-operation. Instead, she woke up the minute I went into her room for the tray of toilet articles. She never did that when Jane I got her bath ready, and I resented it.

She cried all the time I was taking off her nightgown. It was the first time I ever saw Jane II act prudish. She simply wouldn't be undressed. She screamed and struggled and slipped through my knees and protested to the high heavens against the outrage, and those confounded little buttons in the back escaped through my fingers every time she jumped. Why anyone in his right mind would put such buttons on a human garment is beyond me. If the top button hadn't come off and the button-hole lower down hadn't ripped, I'd have had to leave that nightgown on for a bathing suit.

I had the worst time, though, with the

particular *pièce de résistance* called the band. It was a sort of sleeveless jersey without buttons. I couldn't get her head through the top, and her arms wouldn't come loose without breaking. I put her back in the crib while I went downstairs to consult the Instructions. Jane had it on her list all right, but didn't go into details. All Dr. Holt said was that babies should never go without the band for the first eighteen months. I was willing to let Dr. Holt have his way about it, but when I went back, I found that Jane II had got

one arm loose herself. With that start, I peeled the thing off the rest of the way, despite her obstructive attitude.

Jane II stopped crying during the weighing, but it didn't help much, because she mistook the scales for a baby jumper and hopped up and down so hard that the pointer wouldn't stand still long enough to be read. We always weighed her in the little white enamel bath tub—not full, after Archimedes' principle, but padded with a blanket. We subtracted the tub and the blanket and the rest was Jane II. I estimated that she weighed about two ounces more than that other baby.

Just then Bates rang the door bell, and I wondered why the fool had come so early. I had invited him to come over in about a half hour!

"Come in and help yourself to the tobacco and the billiard table, and what time is it?" That last was pure cussedness. It embarrassed Bates.

"I am sorry to be ten minutes late," he called up. "It's twenty-five minutes past eleven." And we hadn't started the bath yet!

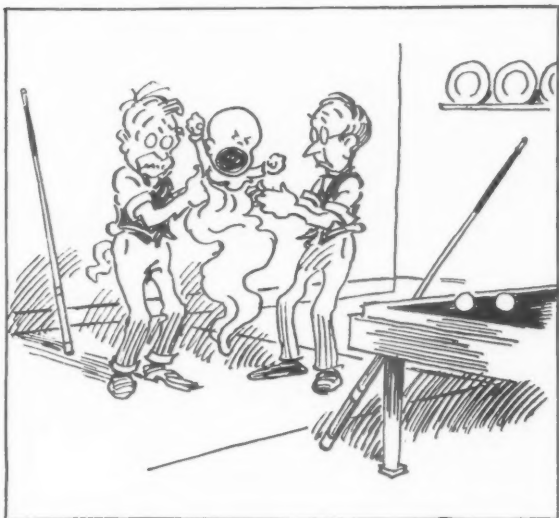
"The cues are back of the door. I'll be down in just a minute." (If he would only keep from ruining the cloth!

If Jane II hadn't started crying again the minute I began to fill her tub, I would never have made the mistake, but a man can't be expected to remember everything. There is no use trying to roll up a shirt sleeve for the elbow test with a baby like Jane II on your lap. I had to take her back to the crib once more. A man's lap—why the devil didn't Jane I mention the rubber bath-apron on her list? We were all ready for the launching, when Jane's protesting heels struck the edge of the tub, and the contents landed in my lap. I had inadvertently left the tub on the scales.

"Is there anything the matter?" called Bates.

"No, I was just emptying the tub. Why? We're almost through."

Then Bates began moving the furni-



When it was my turn to play, I had to give her to Bates to hold.

ture about down in the dining-room.

"Oh! Oh! Mr. Smith?" he fluttered. "The ceiling has sprung a leak. What shall I do?"

"Catch it in your hat," I directed sarcastically above Jane II's uproar. Of course, I apologized immediately, but things were getting on my nerves.

A dent in a seam of the tub made it useless, so there was nothing to do but to give Jane II a sponge bath or swim her in the big tub.

We were well by the ears when Bates called up again.

"It's past my lunch time, Mr. Smith, but I shall come back as soon as I am through."

"Don't hurry away unless you must," I answered. "We're just finishing."

"No, I shall be back later," he insisted. I may be wrong, but Bates' tone seemed to lack some of his earlier awe and admiration.

Except for the dressing and Jane II's continued screaming, the rest of the bath was a success, though we both worked ourselves up to a point where we needed wringing out when we got through. I tucked her in and turned reverently toward Mecca



I began to get scared and telephoned for Doc Hayden.



I am a strong man, but I collapsed.

while I thankfully remembered that she always took a long nap right after the bath. From down-stairs in the dining-billiard parlor, the cuckoo clock noisily proclaimed that we had had a thorough one. Two hours and forty-seven minutes!

Bates got back before I could get my clothes changed. I wouldn't admit that I hadn't had my lunch, because I wanted to prove to Jane I that in a well regulated home there was time enough for pleasant social intercourse, and I hated to leave Bates alone with that billiard cloth.

Upstairs, Jane II was ignoring all the rules and was demanding admission to the game. She soloed, she chorused, she antiphonated. I brought her down and held her. She reëchoed. I hated to impose on a guest, but when it was my turn to play I had to give her to Bates to hold. I could see that he was getting nervous and didn't seem to be enjoying himself, so I threw all our much boasted, scientific upbringing to the winds and walked that baby and rocked her and tossed her and sang and even forgot myself in the presence of ladies. Jane II just drew on all her latent powers and kept one lap ahead.

I began to get scared and telephoned for Doc Hayden. He was out at the

country club playing golf, and they agreed to send a caddy for him. According to the book, Jane II was allowed forty minutes' crying a day for lung development and temperament, but more than that indicated that something was wrong.

When the telephone bell rang, Bates was shooting, and I had to take Jane II to the telephone.

"Say, Doc, there is something—"

"Is that Jane II making the racket?" he interrupted.

"Yes, and—"

"Feed her then." He slammed up the receiver.

Holy Cat! Feeding number two should have come right after the bath! I handed Jane II to Bates and told him to take her upstairs.

While the milk was warming, I boiled up a new nipple according to Jane's parting injunction. But Jane II wouldn't eat. She grabbed the bottle out of my hand and pushed it half way down her throat. Then she let out one roar and gave the bottle a throw. It struck an iron bar on the side of her bed, breaking off short at the neck. I heated some more milk as quickly as I could—I had that 11:15 bottle to spare—and tried her again. She repeated everything except breaking the bottle. I told Bates to send

for the doctor, while I took her temperature.

I was about ready to give up and leave it to Doc Hayden, when Bates came up the stairs with a forefinger aimed accusingly at page 174 of the Holt book.

"Dr. Hayden is coming," he announced, "but I have sent for a nurse and the ambulance from the Mercy Hospital. That baby has got incipient convulsions."

I gasped.

"It says so right here," he affirmed. "Get a tub of warm water ready," he ordered, reading impressively, "and put some mustard in it. And we *must* be calm and test it. 'Without this precaution,' he read, 'in the excitement of the moment infants have frequently been put into baths so hot that serious and almost fatal burns have been produced.'"

"One of us will have to undress her," I suggested humbly. Bates fled for the mustard water, and after the first button, I finished the undressing with a pair of scissors.

The mustard both didn't relieve her a bit. Jane II simply tore things up. Bates so far forgot himself in the excitement that he "Smithed" me.

"Smith, she's gaining on us, and they're not here yet. The book says to wrap her in hot towels."

While Bates telephoned again to the country club and the hospital, I filled the gas-stove oven with Turkish towels.

Then things began to happen. Doc Hayden arrived in his automobile and

came to a skidding stop without regard for tires or curbstones. Bates, berating Central, assisted Jane II in perfecting an uproar loud enough to muffle the gong on the ambulance as it dashed up the hill. A scream added to the variety; Jane I!

She didn't stop to explain then that everything was all over and all O. K. at her sister's and that it was a girl, and that she thought she might be needed more at home. She and the doctor rushed up the stairs and reached Jane II's door nose and nose. A big stillness suddenly filled the house. I grabbed a hot towel from the oven and stumbled up the back stairs as fast as my nerveless legs would permit. Doc Hayden was just coming out.

Jane was sitting on the edge of the bed with her hat knocked over on one ear. Jane II was in her arms and already half way through her seven and a half ounces of modified milk.

I am a strong man, but I collapsed. Jane II finished the last drop with a contented, sleepy gurgle. I looked at Jane.

"A miracle, Jane! How did—?"

Jane was as pityingly scornful as she could manage with one eye "blindered" by the tilted hat.

"I punched a hole in the new nipple." She looked the rest.

I smelled smoke and withdrew hastily to extinguish the oven. Out in front, Doc Hayden was shooing away the ambulance, and from the kitchen window I could see Bates busily sprinkling his zinnias.



The Previous Chapters of "The Ball of Fire"

BIG is what George Randolph Chester calls this new novel. It deals with "big" men and "big" situations and with what is more unusual in fiction, a girl as "big" as they, who is a refreshing change from the siren, the plotter, and the vampire.

Gail Sargent is a brown-eyed glory of a girl from a small inland city, who uses those eyes to see and not to be seen, and who has a way of asking disquieting questions and making pointed comments. She walks into the story and a vestry meeting of the wealthy Market Square Church, New York, where her Uncle Jim Sargent and seven other millionaire vestrymen are haggling over a fifty-million-dollar deal with Edward E. Allison, who has built up the gigantic traction lines of the city. The church wants fifty millions for its Vedder Court tenement property, which Allison is anxious to buy for less for traction terminals.

"How do you like our famous old church?" says the Rev. Smith Boyd, the handsome young rector, at the end of the meeting.

"It seems to be a remarkably lucrative enterprise," smiles Gail.

The Rev. Smith Boyd fixes on her a cold stare. The girl answers his silent rebuke by turning deliberately to the church's big stained-glass transept window. This window portrays Christ turning the money-changers out of the temple. Allison sees and his eyes twinkle. He presses Gail to let him drive her home.

"I'm curious to know the commercial value of a sunset in New York," laughs the girl as they drive. Allison looks at her with keener interest. He indulges in the weakness of bragging—tells her he has worked his way to the summit of a splendid achievement and has decided to rest.

"Why?" asks the girl. Of a sudden he feels like a pricked bubble. Why indeed should a man of his ability stop? And he decides to achieve something that will command her respect.

At a bob-sled party the next evening in Jersey, Allison turns to Jim Sargent and explains that he is ambitious to do bigger things.

"What do you want to conquer next?" asks Sargent. Allison looks at Gail Sargent.

"The world," he says.

He draws across a map of the United States, lines indicating railroads which, connected, would make the most direct route from New York to San Francisco—then proceeds to buy those roads. He calls in old Tim Corman, political boss, and arranges for condemnation of the Vedder Court tenements, and the building under the river of a double-deck, eight-track tube, ostensibly for a municipal subway.

Because this subway is the only crack through which a railroad could get into the heart of New York City, Allison's plan is to have his railroad and street transportation depot all in one big building in Vedder Court, so travelers may step off a train onto an "L," or into a subway.

Allison calls on Gail after a flying trip West. Howard Clemmens, a home-city suitor, is with her. Rev. Smith Boyd has been there, but has departed after seeing Clemmens, in greeting Gail, kiss her. Clemmens, jealous of Gail's surroundings, begs her to marry at once. She refuses, for she suddenly realizes her interests are only in powerful men.

Allison calls a meeting of the seven men whose combined trusts control all the food, coal, iron and building commodities of America. He shows them his railroad, and proposes that he and they form one world-powerful trust—to control the railroad and all these commodities.

"Who is to be monarch of your new empire?" asks one of the seven commercial dictators.

"The best man," answers Allison, and the seven realize that there are now eight great men in the country.

Dalrymple, who owns outright the controlling interest in a North-and-South running road, is asked to sell. He refuses. So these business giants coolly declare there will have to be a panic anyway; they'll crush Dalrymple and get his road then.

Meanwhile Gail Sargent visits squalid Vedder Court and meets Rev. Smith Boyd there. He defends the church from her attack for owning such property—tells her it spends \$15,000 in charity there a year.

"And how much a year does Market Square Church take out of Vedder Court?" asks the girl.

The BALL of FIRE

By GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER
and LILLIAN CHESTER

Illustrated by M. Leone Bracker



CHAPTER XII

Gail Solves the Problem of Vedder Court.

THE Reverend Smith Boyd, rector of the richest church in the world, dropped his last collar button on the floor, and looked distinctly annoyed. The collar button rolled under his mahogany high-boy, and concealed itself carefully behind one of the legs.

The Reverend Smith Boyd, there being none to see, laid aside his dignity and sank to his knees, though not for any clerical purpose. With his suspenders hanging down his back, he sprawled his long arms under the high-boy in all directions, while his face grew red; and the little collar button, snuggled carefully out of sight behind the furthest leg, just shone and shone.

The Rector, the ticking of whose dressing-room clock admonished him that the precious moments were passing never to return again, twisted his neck, and bent his head sidewise and inserted it under the high-boy, one ear scraping the rug and the other the bottom of the lowest drawer. No collar button.

He withdrew his neck, and twisted his head in the opposite direction, and

inserted his head again under the high-boy, so that the ear which had scraped the carpet now scraped the bottom of the drawer, whereat the little collar button shone so brightly that the Rector's bulging eye caught the glint of it.

His hand swung round, at the end of a long arm, and captured the button before it could hide any further. Then the earnest seeker withdrew his throbbing temples and started to raise up, and bumped the back of his head, with a crack, on the bottom of an open drawer which was near enough to the top to give him a good long sweep for momentum. This mishap being just one degree beyond the point to which the Reverend Smith Boyd had been consecrated, he ejaculated as follows—

No, it is not respectful, or proper, or charitable, to set down what the Reverend Smith Boyd, in that stress, ejaculated, but a beautiful gray-haired lady, beautiful with the sweetness of content and the happiness of gratified pride and the kindness of humor, who had paused at the Reverend Smith Boyd's open door to inquire how soon he would be down to dinner, hastily covered her mouth with her hand, and moved

away from the door with moist blue eyes, around which twinkled a dozen tiny wrinkles born of much smiling.

When the dignified young rector came down to dinner, fully clothed and apparently in his right mind, his mother, who was the beautiful gray-haired lady with the twinkling blue eyes, looked across the table and smiled indulgently at his disguise; for he was not a grown-up, tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty-two at all. In reality he was a shock-headed, slightly freckled urchin of nine or ten, by the name of "Smitty" on the town commons, and "Tod" at home.

"Aren't you becoming a trifle irritable of late, Tod?" she inquired, wilefully suppressing a smile.

"Yes, Mother, I believe I am," confessed the Reverend Smith Boyd.

"You are not ill in any way?"

"Not at all," he hastily assured her.

"You've no headache?"

"No, Mother."

"Do you sleep well?"

The Reverend Smith Boyd took a drink of water. His hand trembled slightly.

"Excellently."

Mrs. Boyd surveyed her son with a practiced eye.

"I think your appetite's dropping off a little," she commented, and then she was shrewdly silent, though the twinkles of humor came back to her eyes by and by.

"I don't think you take enough social diversion," she finally advised him. "You should go out more. You should ride or walk, but always in the company of young and agreeable people. Because you are a rector is no reason for you to spend your spare time in gloomy solitude, as you have been doing for the past week."

The Reverend Smith Boyd would have liked to state that he had been very busy, but he had a conscience which was a nuisance to him. He had spent most of his spare time up in his study, with his chin in his hand.

"You are quite right, Mother," he somberly confessed.

"I think I'll drive you out of the house, Tod," Mrs. Boyd decided, in the

same tones she used to employ when she sent him to bed. "I think I'll send you over to Sargent's to-night, to sing with Gail."

The rector of the richest church in the world flushed a trifle, and looked at the barley in the bottom of his soup. His mother regarded him quietly, and the twinkles went out of her eyes. She had been bound to get at the bottom of his irritability, and now she had arrived at it.

"I would prefer not to go," he told her stiffly.

"Why?"

Again that slight twitch of impatience in his brows; then he suppressed a sigh. The catechism was on the way, and he might just as well answer up promptly.

"I do not approve of Miss Sargent."

For just one second the Rector's mother felt an impulse to shake Tod Boyd. Gail Sargent was a young lady of whom any young man might approve—and what was the matter with Tod? She was beginning to be humiliated by the fact that, at thirty-two, he had not lost his head and made a fool of himself, to the point of tight shoes and poetry, over a girl.

"Why?" And the voice of Mrs. Boyd was not cold as she had meant it to be. She had suddenly felt some tug of sympathy for Tod.

"Well, for one thing, she has a most disagreeable lack of reverence," he stated.

"Reverence?" And Mrs. Boyd knitted her brows. "I don't believe you quite understand her."

"Miss Sargent claims to have a new religion," he observed. "She has said most unkind things about the church as an institution, and about Market Square Church in particular. She says that it is a strictly commercial institution, and that its motive in desiring to build the new cathedral is vanity."

He omitted to mention Gail's further charge that his own motive in desiring the new cathedral was personal ambition. Candor did not compel that admission. It did not become him to act from piqued personal pride.



For just one second the Rector's mother felt an impulse to shake Tod Boyd. She was beginning to be humiliated by the fact that, at thirty-two, he had not lost his head and made a fool of himself, to the point of tigh: shoes and poetry, over a girl.

Mrs. Boyd studied him as he gazed somberly at his fish, and the twinkles once more returned to her eyes as she made up her mind to cure Tod's irritability.

"I am ashamed of you," she told her son. "This girl is scarcely twenty. If I remember rightly, and I'm sure that I do, you came to me, at about twenty, and confessed to a logical disbelief in the theory of creation, which included, of course, a disbelief in the Creator. You were an infidel, an atheist. You were about to relinquish your studies, and give up all thought of the Church."

The deep red of the Reverend Smith Boyd's face testified to the truth of this charge, and he pushed back his fish permanently.

"I most humbly confess," he stated, and indeed he had writhed in spirit many times over that remembrance. "However, Mother, I have since discovered that stage to be a transitional one through which every theological student passes."

"Yet you wont allow it to a girl," charged Mrs. Boyd, with the severity which she could have much better expressed with a laugh. "When you discover that this young lady, who seems to be in every way delightful, is so misled as to criticise the motives of Market Square Church, you withdraw into your dignity, with the privilege of a layman, and announce that you 'do not approve of her.' What she needs, Tod, is religious instruction."

She had carefully ironed out the tiny little wrinkles around her blue eyes by the time her son looked up from the profound cogitation into which this reproof had thrown him.

"Mother, I have been wrong," he admitted, and he seemed ever so much brighter for the confession. He drew his fish towards him and ate it.

Later the Reverend Smith Boyd presented himself at James Sargent's house, with a new light shining in his breast; and he had blue eyes! He had come to show Gail the way and the light. If she had doubts, and lack of faith, and flip-pant irreverence, it was his duty to be patient with her, for this was the fault

of youth. He had been youthful himself.

Gail's eyelids dropped and the corners of her lips twitched when the Reverend Smith Boyd's name was brought up to her, but she did her hair in another way, high on her head instead of low, and then she went down, bewildering in her simple little dark blue velvet, cut round at the neck.

"I'm so glad your cold is better," she greeted him. "I was afraid that your voice was out; you haven't been over for so long."

The Reverend Smith Boyd colored. At times the way of spiritual instruction was quite difficult. Nevertheless, he had a duty to perform. Mechanically he had taken his place at the piano, standing straight and tall, and his blue eyes softened as they automatically fell on the piece of music she had opened. Of course it was their favorite, the one in which their voices had soared in the most perfect unison. Gail glanced up at him as she brushed a purely imaginary fleck of dust from the keys. For an instant the brown eyes and the blue ones met. He was a tremendously nice fellow, after all. But what was worrying him?

"Before we sing, I should like to take up graver matters," he began, feeling at a tremendous disadvantage in the presence of the music. To obviate this, he drew up a chair, and sat facing her. "I have called this evening in the capacity of your temporary rector."

Gail's eyelids had a tendency to flicker down, but she restrained them. She was adorable when she looked prim that way. Her lips were like a rosebud. The Reverend Smith Boyd himself thought of the simile, and cast it behind him.

"You are most kind," she told him, suppressing the imps and demons which struggled to pop into her eyes.

"I have been greatly disturbed by the length to which your unbelief has apparently gone," the young rector went on, and having plunged into this opening he began to breathe more freely. This was familiar ground. "I am willing to admit, to one of your intelligence, that there are certain articles of

the creed, and certain tenets of the Church, which humanity claims to have outgrown, as a child outgrows its fear of the dark."

Gail rested a palm on the edge of the bench behind her, and leaned back facing him, supported on one beautifully modeled arm. Her face had set seriously now.

"However," went on the Rector, "it is the habit and the privilege of youth to run to extremes. Sweeping doubt takes the place of reasonable criticism, and the much which is good is condemned alike with the little which has grown useless."

He paused to give Gail a chance for reply, but that straight-eyed young lady had nothing to say, at this juncture.

"I do not expect to be able to remove, by any other means than patient logic, the spiritual errors which I am compelled to judge that you have accumulated," he resumed. "May I discuss these matters with you?" His voice was grave and serious, and full of earnest sincerity, and the musical quality alone of it made patient discussion seem attractive.

"If you like," she assented, smiling at him.

"Thank you," he accepted gravely. "If you will give me an hour or so each week, I shall be very happy."

"I am nearly always at home on Tuesday and Friday evenings," suggested Gail. "Scarcely anyone calls before eight thirty, and we have dinner quite early on those evenings." She began to be sincerely interested in the project.

"I shall make arrangements to be over as early as you will permit," declared the Rector, warmly aglow with the idea. "We shall begin with the very beginnings of things, and, step by step, develop, I hope, a logical justification of the vast spiritual revolution which has conquered the world."

"I should like nothing better," mused Gail, and since the Reverend Smith Boyd rose, and stood behind her and filled his lungs, she turned to the piano and struck a preliminary chord, which she trailed off into a tinkling little run, by way of friendly greeting to the piano.

"We shall begin with the creation," pursued the Rector, dwelling, with pleasure, on the idea of a thorough progress through the mazes of religious growth. There were certain vague points which he wanted to clear up for himself.

"And wind up with Vedder Court." She had not meant to say that. It just popped into her mind, and popped off the end of her tongue.

"Even that will be taken up in its due logical sequence." And the Reverend Smith Boyd prided himself on having already displayed the patience which he had come expressly to exercise.

Gail was immediately aware that he was exercising patience. He had reproved her, nevertheless, and quite coldly, for having violated the tacit agreement to take up the different phases of their weighty topic only in their due logical sequence. The Rector, in this emergency, could have found no answer which would stand the test, but Gail had the advantage of femininity.

"It altogether depends at which end we start our sequence," she sweetly reminded him. "My own impression is that we should begin at Vedder Court and work back to the creation. Vedder Court needs immediate attention."

That was quite sufficient. When Allison called, twenty minutes later, they were at it hammer and tongs. There was a bright red spot on each of Gail's cheeks, and the Reverend Smith Boyd's cold eyes were distinctly green! Allison had been duly announced, but the combatants merely glanced at him, and finished the few remarks upon which they were, at the moment, engaged. He had been studying the tableau with the interest of a connoisseur, and he had devoted a trifle more attention to the Reverend Smith Boyd than to Gail.

"So glad to see you," said Gail conventionally, rising and offering him her hand. If there was that strange thrill in his clasp, she was not aware of it.

"I only ran in to see if you'd like to take a private car trip in the new subway before it is opened," offered Allison, turning to shake hands with the Reverend Smith Boyd. "Will you join us, Doctor?"

For some reason a new sort of jangle had come into the room, and it affected the three of them. Allison was the only one who did not notice that he had taken Gail's acceptance for granted.

"You might tell us when," observed Gail, transferring the flame of her eyes from the Rector to Allison. "I may have conflicting engagements."

"No, you wont," Allison cheerfully informed her, "because it will be at any hour you set."

"Oh," responded Gail, weakly, recognizing that she was fairly beaten; then her white teeth flashed at him in a smile of humor. "Suppose we say ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I am free at that hour," stated Doctor Boyd, in response to a glance of inquiry from Allison. He felt it his duty to keep in touch with public improvements. Also, beneath his duty, lay a keen pleasure in the task.

"You'll be very much interested, I think." And Allison glowed with the ever-present pride of achievement, after which he suddenly grinned. "The new subway stops at the edge of Vedder Court—waiting."

There was another little pause of embarrassment, in which Gail and the Reverend Smith Boyd were very careful not to glance at each other. Unfortunately, however, the Reverend Smith Boyd was luckless enough, automatically, and without conscious mental process, to fold the sheet of music which Gail had long since placed on the piano.

"Why stop at the edge of Vedder Court?" inquired Gail, with a nervous little jerk, much as if the words had been jolted out of her by the awkward slam of the music rack, which had succeeded the removal of the song. "Why not go straight on through, and demolish Vedder Court? It is a scandal and a disgrace to civilization and to the city, as well as to its present proprietors! Vedder Court should be annihilated, torn down, burned up, swept from the face of the earth! The board of health should condemn it as insanitary; the building commission should condemn it as unsafe; the department of public morals should condemn it as unwholesome!"

The Reverend Smith Boyd had been engaged in a strong wrestle within himself, but the spirit finally conquered the flesh, and he held his tongue. He remembered that Gail was young, and youth was prone to extravagant impulse. His spirit of forbearance came so strongly to his aid that he was even able to acknowledge how beautiful Gail was when she was aroused.

Allison had been viewing her with mingled admiration and respect.

"By George, that's a great idea," he thoughtfully commented. "Gail, I think I'll tear down Vedder Court for you."

CHAPTER XIII

The Survival of the Fittest.

A short, thick old man, gray-bearded and puff-eyed and loaded with enormous jewels, met Gail, Lucile and Arly, Ted Teasdale and the Reverend Smith Boyd, at the foot of the subway stairs, and introduced himself with smiling ease as Tim Corman, beaming with much pride in his wide-spread fame.

"Mr. Allison sent me to meet you," he stated, with a bow on which he justly complimented himself. "Allison played a low trick on me, ladies." And he gazed on them in turns with a jovial familiarity which, in another, they might have resented. "From the description he gave me, I was looking for the most beautiful young lady in the world, and here there's three of you." His eyes swelled completely shut when he laughed. "So you'll have to help me out. Which one of you is Miss Sargent?"

"The young lady who answers the description," smiled Arly, delighted with Tim Corman, and she indicated Gail.

"Mr. Allison couldn't be here," explained Tim, leading the way to the brightly lighted private car. "We're to pick him up at Hoadley Park. Miss Sargent, as hostess of the party, is to have charge of everything."

The side doors slid open as they approached, and they entered the carpeted and draped car, furnished with wicker chairs and a well-stocked buffet. In the forward compartment were three respon-



"We shall begin with the creation," said the Rector. "And wind up with Vedder Court!" She had not meant to say that. It just popped out.

sible looking men and a motorman; and one of the responsables, a fat gentleman who did not seem to care how his clothes looked, leaned into the parlor.

"All ready?" he inquired, with an air of concealing a secret impression that ladies had no business here.

Tim Corman, who had carefully seen to it that he had a seat between Gail and Arly, touched Gail on the glove.

"Ready, thank you," she replied, glancing brightly at the loosely arrayed fat man, and she could see that immediately a portion of that secret impression was removed.

With an easy glide, which increased with surprising rapidity into express speed, the car slid into the long, glistening tunnel, still moist with the odors of building.

Tim Corman immediately blocked Gail into a corner, and began holding her attention.

"Ed Allison's one of the smartest boys in New York," he enthusiastically declared. "Did you ever see anybody as busy as he is?"

"He seems to be a very energetic man," Gail assented.

"Gets anything he goes after," Tim informed her, and screwed one of his many-puffed eyes into a wink—at which significant action Gail looked out at the motorman. "Never tells his plans to anybody, nor what he wants. Just goes and gets it."

"That's a successful way, I should judge," responded Gail, now able to see the humor of Tim Corman's volunteer mission, but a red spot beginning to dawn, nevertheless, in either cheek.

"Well, he's square," asserted Tim judicially. "Understand, he don't care how he gets a thing just so he gets it, but if he makes you a promise he'll keep it. That's what I call square."

Gail nodded. She had discerned that quality in Allison.

"What I like about him is that he always wins," went on Tim. "Nobody in this town has ever passed him the prunes. Do you know what he did? He started with two miles of rust and four horse-cars, and now he owns the whole works."

Gail knitted her brows. She had heard

something of this marvelous tale before, and it had interested her. She had been groping for an explanation of Allison's tremendous force.

"That was a wonderful achievement. How did he accomplish it?"

"Made 'em get off and walk," boasted Tim, with vast pride in the fact. "Any time Eddy run across a man that had a street-car line, he choked it out of him. He's a wizard."

Tim's statement seemed to be somewhat clouded in metaphor, but Gail managed to gather that Allison had possibly used first-principle methods on his royal pathway to success.

"You mean that he drove them out of business."

"Pushed 'em off!" And Tim's voice was exultant.

"I don't think I understand business," pondered Gail. "It seems so cruel."

"So is baseball, if you want to figure that it's a shame that the losers have to take a licking," chuckled Tim. "Anybody Allison likes is lucky." And with the friendly familiarity of an old man, Tim Corman patted Gail on the glove.

"It occurs to me that I'm neglecting my opportunities," observed Gail, rising. "I'm supposed to be running this car." And going to the glass door she looked into the motorman's compartment, which was large, and had seats in it, and all sorts of mysterious tools and appliances in the middle of the floor.

Tim Corman, as Allison's personal representative, was right on the spot.

"Come on out," he invited, and opened the door, whereupon the three responsible looking men immediately arose.

Gail hesitated, then smiled. She turned to look at the others, half wondering if she should invite them to come, and whether a crowd would be welcomed, but the quartet were gathered on the observation platform, watching the tunnel swallow itself.

"Mr. Gregory, general manager of the Municipal Transportation Company, Miss Sargent," introduced Tim, and the fat man bowed, with still another portion of that secret opinion removed. "Mr. Lincoln, general engineer of the Transportation Company, Miss Sargent." And

the thin-faced man with the high forehead and the little French mustache bowed, smiling his decided approval. "Mr. McCarthy, general construction manager of the Transportation Company, Miss Sargent." And the red-faced man with the big red mustache bowed, grinning. Tim Gorman led Gail forward to the motorman, and tapped him on the shoulder. "Show her how it works, Tom," he directed.

So it was that Edward E. Allison, standing quite alone on the platform of the Hoadley Park station, saw the approaching trial-trip car stop, and run slowly, and run backwards, and dart forwards, and perform all sorts of experimental movements before it rushed down to his platform, with a rosy-cheeked girl standing at the levers, her brown eyes sparkling, her red lips parted in a smile of ecstatic happiness, her hat off and her waving brown hair flowing behind her in the sweep of the wind. To one side stood a highly pleased motorman, while a short, thick old man, and a careless fat man, and a man with a high forehead and one with a red mustache, all smiling indulgently, clogged the space in the rear.

Allison boarded the car, and greeted his guests, and came straight through to the motorman's cage, as Gail, in response to the clang of the bell, pulled the lever. She was just getting that easy starting glide, and was vastly proud of it.

"You should not stand bare-headed in front of that window," greeted Allison, almost roughly; and he closed it.

Gail turned very sweetly to the motorman.

"Thank you," she said, and gave him the lever; then she walked back into the car. It had required some repression to avoid recognizing that dictatorial attitude, and Allison felt that she was rather distant, wondering what was the matter; but he was a practical minded person, and he felt that it would soon blow over.

"This is the deepest line in the city," he informed her, as she led the way back to the group in the parlor division. "Every subway we build presents more difficult problems of construction because of the crossings."

"I should think it would be most difficult," indifferently responded Gail, and hurried back to the girls. "I feel horribly selfish," she confessed, slipping her arm around Lucile on one side and Arly on the other; and the Reverend Smith Boyd, strangely inclined to poetry these days, compared them to the Three Graces, with Hope in the center. They were an attractive picture for the looking of any man: the blonde Lucile, the brown Gail, and the black-haired Arly, all fresh-checked, slender, and sparkling of eye.

"I'm glad your conscience smites you," smiled Arly. "Wasn't it fun?"

"The most glorious in the world!" And Gail glanced doubtfully at Tim Corman, who was right on the spot.

"Come on, girls," heartily invited Tim, able to catch a hint as fast as any man. "I'll introduce you to Tom." And, profoundly happy in his gallantry, he returned to the front of the car with a laughing blonde on one arm and a laughing brunette on the other.

Allison turned confidently to chat with Gail, but that young lady, smiling on the Reverend Smith Boyd, moved back to the observation platform, and the Reverend Smith Boyd followed the smile with alacrity.

"I've been neglecting this view," observed Gail, as she gazed out at the rapidly diminishing perspective, and she glanced up sidewise at the tall young rector, whose eyes were perfectly blue.

He answered something or other, and the conversation was so obviously tête-à-tête that Allison remained behind. Ted Teasdale had long since found, in the engineer, a man who knew motor boating in every phase of its failures; so Allison and Tim Corman were in sole possession of the parlor compartment. Tim looked up at Allison with a complacent grin, as the latter sat beside him.

"Well, Eddie, I put in a plug for you," stated Tim, with the air of one looking for approval.

"How's that?" inquired Allison, abstractedly.

"Boosted you to the girl. Say, she's a peach!"

Allison looked quickly back at the

platform, and then frowned down on his zealous friend Tim.

"What did you tell Miss Sargent about me?"

"Don't you worry, Eddie; it's all right," laughed Tim. "I hinted to her, so that she had to get it, that you're about the most eligible party in New York. I let her in on it that no man in this village has ever skinned you. She wanted to know how you made this big combination, and I told her you made 'em all get off—pushed 'em off the map. Take it from me, Eddie, after I got through, she knew where to find a happy home."

Allison's brows knitted in quick anger, and then suddenly he startled the subway with its first loud laugh. He understood now, or thought he did, Gail's distant attitude; but, knowing what was the matter, he could easily straighten it out.

"Thanks, Tim," he chuckled. "Let's talk business a minute. I had you hold up the Vedder Court condemnation because I got a new idea last night. Those buildings are unsafe."

"Well, the building commissioners have to make a living," considered Tim.

"That's what I think," agreed Allison.

Tim Corman looked up at him shrewdly out of his puffy slits of eyes.

"I get you," he said, and the business talk being concluded, Allison went forward.

"McCarthy," he snapped, in a voice which grated, "what are all those boxes back in the beginning of the 'Y' of the West Docks branch?"

"Blasting material." And McCarthy looked uncomfortable.

"Get it out," ordered Allison, and returned to Tim.

The girls and Ted came back presently, and, with their arrival, Gail brought the Reverend Smith Boyd into the crowd; thereupon they resolved themselves into some appearance of sociability, and Allison, for the amusement of the company, slyly started old Tim Corman into a line of personal reminiscences, so replete in unconscious humor and so frank in the unconscious disclosure of callous knavery, that the party needed no other entertainment.

Out in the open, the route took them now, where the sun paled the electric lights of the car into a sickly yellow; next, up into the air, peering into third story tenements and down narrow alleys a-flutter with countless flapping pieces of laundry work; then suddenly into the darkness of the tunnel again; then out, on the surface of country fields and dreary winter landscape, to the terminal. It was more cozy in the tunnel, and they returned there for lunch, while the general manager and the general engineer and the general construction manager of the Municipal Transportation Company, with occasional crisp visits from President Allison, soberly discussed the condition of the line. The Reverend Smith Boyd displayed an unexpected technical interest in that subject. He had taken an engineering course in college, and, in fact, he had once wavered seriously between that occupation and the Church, and he put two or three questions so pertinent that he awakened a new respect in Allison.

Allison took the Rector to the observation platform to explain something in the construction of the receding tunnel, and as they stood there earnestly talking, with concentrated brows and with eyes searching into each other for quick understanding, Gail Sargent was suddenly struck by a wonder as to what makes the differences in men.

Allison, slightly stocky, standing with his feet spread sturdily apart and his hands in his coat pockets and his clean-cut profile slightly upturned to the young Rector, was the very epitome of force, of decisive action, of unconquerable will. He seemed fairly to radiate resistless energy, and as she looked, Gail was filled again with the admiration she had often felt for this exponent of the distinctively American spirit of achievement. She had never seen the type in so perfect an example, and again there seemed to wave toward her that indefinable thrill with which he had so often impressed her. Was the thrill altogether pleasurable? She could not tell, but she did know that with it there was mixed a something which she could not quite fathom in herself. Was it dislike? No, not that. Was

it resentment? Was it fear? She asked herself that last question again.

The Rector was vastly different—taller and broader-shouldered, and more erect of carriage, and, though fully as firm of profile, somehow he did not seem to impress her with the strength of Allison. He was more temperamental, and, consequently, more susceptible to change—therefore weaker. Was that deduction correct? She wondered, for it troubled her. She was not quite satisfied.

Suddenly there came a dull, muffled report, like the distant firing of a cannon; then an interval of silence, an infinitesimal one, in which the car ran smoothly on, and they all, half rising, looked at each other in startled questioning. Then, all at once, came a deafening roar, as if the world had split asunder, a jolting and jerking, a headlong stoppage, a clattering and slapping and crashing and grinding, deafening in its volume, and with it all, darkness—blackness so intense that it seemed almost palpable to the touch!

There was a single shriek, and a nervous laugh verging on hysteria. The shriek was from Arly, and the laugh from Lucile. There was a cry from the forward end of the car, as of some one in pain. Then came a man's roar of fright—from Gregory, the general manager. A strong hand clutched Gail's in the darkness, firm, reassuring—that of the Rector.

"Don't move!" It was the voice of Allison, crisp, harsh, commanding.

"Anybody hurt?" This from Tim Corman—the voice of age, but otherwise steady. One could sense, somehow, that he sat rigid in his chair, with both hands on his cane.

"It's me," called Tom, the motorman. "Head cut a little, arm bruised. Nothing bad."

"Gail?"—Allison again.

"Yes,"—clear voiced, with the courage which has no sex.

"Mrs. Teasdale? Mrs. Fosland?"

Both were all right, one a trifle sharp of voice, the other nervous.

"Ted? Doctor Boyd?" And so through the list. Everybody was safe.

"It is an accidental blast," said the voice of Allison. He had figured that a

concise statement of just what had happened might expedite organization. "We are below the Farmount Ridge, over a hundred feet deep, and the tube has caved in on us. There must be no waste of exertion. Don't move until I find what electrical dangers there are."

They obeyed his admonition not to move, even to the extent of silence, for there was an instinct that Allison might need to hear minutely. He made his way into the front compartment, and called to the chief engineer. There was a clanking of the strange looking implements on the floor of the car. A match flared up, and showed the pale face of the engineer bending over.

"No matches," ordered Allison. "We may need the oxygen."

He and the engineer made their way back into the parlor compartment. They took up the door of the motor-well in the floor, and in a few minutes they replaced it. From the sounds they seemed wonderfully clumsy.

"No current," commented Allison. "The next thing is to dig."

They were silent a moment.

"In front or behind?" wondered the engineer.

Again a pause.

"In front," decided Allison. "The explosion came from that direction, and has probably shaken down more of the soil there than behind, but it's solid clay in the rear, and further out."

Gail felt the Rector's hand suddenly leave her own. It had been wonderfully comforting there in the dark, so firm and warm and steady. He had not talked much to her, just a few reassuring words, in that low, melodious voice which thrilled her, as did, occasionally, the touch of Allison's hand, as did the eyes of Dick Rodley. But she had received more strength from the voice of Allison. He was big, Allison, a power, a force, a spirit of command. She began, for the first time, to comprehend his magnitude.

"What have we to dig with?"—the voice of the Reverend Smith Boyd, and there was a note of eagerness in it.

"The benches up in front here," yelled McCarthy, and there was a ripping sound as he tore the seat from one.

"Pardon me." It was the voice of the Rector, up in front.

"The balance of you sit down, and keep rested," ordered Allison. "McCarthy, Boyd and I go first."

The long struggle began, the girls, grouped together in the back of the car, moving little, for there was much broken glass about. Forward, the three men could be heard making an opening into the débris through the windows. They talked a great deal, at first, strong, capable voices. They were interfering with each other, then helping, combining their strength to move heavy stones and the like; then they were silent, working independently, or in effective unison.

Tim Corman was the possessor of a phosphorescent-faced watch, and he constituted himself timekeeper.

"Thirty minutes," he called out. "It's our shift."

"You'd better save yourself, Tim," suggested Gregory in a kindly tone.

"I'll do as much as any of you!" growled old Tim, with the will, if not the quality, of youth in his voice. "Will one of you girls take care of my rings?" And stripping them from his fingers, he laid them carefully in the outstretched palms of Arly. There was a good handful of them.

The men crawled in from outside, but they stayed in the front compartment. The air was growing a trifle close, and they breathed heavily.

"Good-by, Girl," called the gaily funeral voice of Ted Teasdale. "Husband is going to work."

"Put on your gloves," Lucile reminded him.

Another interminable wait, while the air grew more stifling. There was no further levity after Lincoln and the motorman and McCarthy had come back; for the condition was becoming serious. Some air must undoubtedly be finding its way to the car through the loose débris, but the carbonic acid gas exhaled from a dozen pairs of lungs was beginning to pocket, and the opening ahead, though steadily pushing forward, displayed no signs of lessening solidity.

They established shorter shifts now—quarter-hours. The men went silently in

and out, and as silently worked, and as silently rested.

Greggory was the first to give out, then the injured motorman. When their turns came, they had not the strength nor the air in their lungs. Strong McCarthy was the next to join them.

The shifts had reduced to two, of two men each, by now—Ted and old Tim, and Allison and the Rector; and these latter two worked double time. Their lips and their tongues were parched and cracking, and in their periods of rest they sat motionless, facing each other, with a wheeze in the drawing of their breath. Their breathing could be heard from the forward end of their little tunnel clear back into the car, where the three girls were battling to preserve their senses against the poisonous gases which were now all that they had to breathe.

Acting on the Rector's advice, they had stood up in the car to escape the gradually rising level of the carbonic acid gas—stood, as the time progressed, with their mouths agape and their breasts heaving and sharp pains in their lungs.

Arly dropped, silently crumpling to the floor; then, a few minutes later, Lucile; and, panic-stricken by the thought that they had gone under, Gail felt her own senses reeling, when suddenly, looking ahead through eyes which were staring, she saw a crack of blessed light!

There was a hoarse cry from ahead! The crack of light widened. Another one appeared, some four feet to the right of it, and Gail already fancied that she could feel a freshening of the air she breathed with such tearing pain. Against the light of the openings, two figures, the only two which were left to work, strove, at first with the slow, limp motions of exhaustion, and then with the renewed vigor of approaching triumph.

She could distinguish them clearly now, by the light which streamed in: the stocky, strong figure of Allison and the tall, sinewy figure of the Rector. They were working frantically, Allison with his coat off, and the Rector with his coat and vest both removed. One sleeve was torn almost entirely from the Rector's shirt, revealing, on his swelling biceps, a long, red scratch. Gail's senses were



A huge boulder had barred the path, and its removal let down a rush of pure, fresh air from the ground above, let down, too, a flood of dazzling light; and in the curving under-rim of the opening stood the two stalwart men who represented the survival of the fittest!

numbed, so that they were reduced to almost merely optical consciousness, so that she saw things photographically; but, even in her numbness, she realized that what she had thought a trace of weakness in the Rector was only the grace which had rounded his strength.

The two figures bent inward toward each other. There was a moment of mighty straining, and then the whole center between the two cracks rolled away! A huge boulder had barred the path, and its removal let down a rush of pure, fresh air from the ground above, let down, too, a flood of dazzling light; and in the curving under-rim of the opening stood the two stalwart men who represented the survival of the fittest! The mere instinct of self-preservation drove Gail forward, with a cry, toward the source of that life-giving air, and she scrambled through the window and ran toward the two men. They came hurriedly down to meet her, and each gave her a hand!

CHAPTER XIV

The Free and Entirely Uncurbed.

Gail Sargent became suddenly and acutely aware of an entirely new ethnological subdivision of the human race. She had known of Caucasians, Mongolians, Ethiopians, and the others, but now she was to meet the representatives of the gay, care-free, and entirely uncurbed metropolitan press! Figuratively, they swarmed from the ground, dropped from the eaves, and wriggled from under the rugs!

Immediately after Gail had reached home from the accident in the subway, and had been put to bed and given tea, and had repeatedly assured the doctor that there was nothing the matter with her, they brought, at her urgent request, copies of the "extras" which were already being yelled from every street corner and down every quiet residence block.

The accounts were, in the main, more or less accurate, barring the fact that they started with the assumption that there had been one hundred in Allison's party, all killed. Later issues, however,

regretfully reduced the number of dead to forty, six, and finally none, at which point the papers became more or less coherent, and gave an exact list of the people who were there, the cause of the accident, and a most appreciatively accentuated history of the heroic work of the men. Although she regretted that her picture had by this time crept into the public prints, grouped with the murders and defalcations of the day, she was able to overlook this personal discomfort as one of the minor penalties which civilization has paid for its progress—like electric light bugs and electric fan neuralgia and the smell of gasoline.

Long before this period, however, the reporters had tracked her to her lair, so long before, in fact, that there had been three of them waiting on the door step when she was brought into the house—eager young men, with a high spirit of reverence and delicacy, which was concentrated entirely on their jobs. They would have held her on the doorstep until she fainted or dropped dead, if, by so doing, they could have obtained one statement upon which they could have fastened something derogatory to her reputation, or the reputation of any of her family or friends; for that was great stuff, and what the public wanted; and they would have photographed her gleefully in the process of expiring!

Aunt Helen Davies, being a woman of experience, snatched Gail into the house before they had taken more than eight or nine photographs of her, but, from that instant, the door bell became a nuisance and the telephone bell a torture. Both were finally disconnected, but, at as late an hour as three A. M., the house was occasionally assaulted.

By that time Gail had telegrams of frantic inquiry from all her friends back home, including the impulsive Clemmens, and particularly including a telegram from her mother, stating that that highly agitated lady could not get a reservation on the first train on account of its being Saturday night, but that she would start on the fast eleven-thirty the next morning; whereat Gail kissed the telegram, and cried a little, and gave way to the moist joy of homesickness.

Meantime, the representatives of the gay and carefree and absolutely uncurbed metropolitan press were by no means discouraged by the fact that they had not been able to obtain much, except hectic imaginings, from the exterior of the Sargent house. They were busy in every other possible direction, with the same commendable persistence which we observe in an ant trying to drag a grasshopper up and down a corn-stalk.

They received a straight account from Allison, a modest one from the Rector, and variously viewed experiences from other male members of the party; and they collected huge piles of photographs, among them charming pictures of Gail, prints which had previously appeared on the innocent pages of arrivals at Palm Beach and the Riviera and other fashionable winter resorts, the whole spread being headed "What Society Is Doing."

So far, the explosion editors of the various papers had seen nothing particularly to commend in the work of their fevered emissaries, and only the compliment of a grateful grunt went even to the heavy-jawed genius who invented the fiction that the explosion had cracked the walls of every subway in the city, which were likely to cave in at any moment!

Little Miss Piper, of the *Morning Planet*, was possessed of a better thought. She quietly slipped on her ugly little bonnet, and hurried out to the magnificent residence of Mrs. Phyllis Worthmore, who loathed publicity and had photographs taken once a month for the purpose.

Mrs. Phyllis Worthmore was invariably sweet and gracious to working women, for, after all, they were her sisters, you know; and she excused herself from a caller in order to meet little Miss Piper in Mr. Worthmore's deserted den. Mrs. Worthmore was highly agitated over the news of the explosion, and she required no particular urging to jabber on and on about her dear friends who had been in that terrible catastrophe, being ultra enthusiastic when the name of Gail was mentioned.

"Oh, Miss Sargent is quite the sensation of the season!" she gushed. "Her people are fairly well to do, I believe;

but her beauty makes up for the absence of any extravagant fortune. It is commonly conceded that none of the eligibles in our set are available until Miss Sargent has made her choice. Positively all of them are at her feet!" And, at puckered little Miss Piper's later request, she lightly enumerated a few of the eligibles in their set.

The result of that light-hearted and light-headed interview, in which Mrs. Phyllis Worthmore, by special request, was not quoted, suddenly sprang on the startled eyes of Gail, when she leafed through the *Sunday Planet* at eight o'clock next morning. An entire page, embellished in the center with a beautifully printed photograph, was devoted to the sensational beauty from the middle West! Around her were grouped nine smaller photographs; Allison, Dick Rodley, Willis Cunningham, Houston Van Ploon, the Reverend Smith Boyd, a callow youth who had danced with her three times, a Count who had said "How do you do?" and sailed for Europe, and two men whom she had never met!

All these crack eligibles were classified under the general head of "Slaves to Her Witching Smile," and a big, boxed-in list was given, in extremely black-face type, stating, in dollars and cents, the exact value in the matrimonial market of each slave; and the lively genius who had put together this symposium, by a toweringly happy thought conceived in the very height of the rush hours, totalled the whole, and gave it as the commercial worth of Gail's beauty and charm! It ran into thirteen figures, including the dollar mark and the two ciphers for cents!

Nor was this all! A lightning fingered artist had depicted, at the bottom of the group, outline sketches of the nine suitors, on their knees in a row, holding up, towards the beautiful picture of Gail in the center, their hearts in one hand and their bags of money in the other; and, even though over-worked, the artist had not neglected to put the Cross of the Legion of Honor on the breast of the Count, nor the sparse Van Dyke on Willis Cunningham. Flowing with further facile fancy, he had embellished the up-

per right hand corner of the group with an extremely lithe and slim-waisted drawing of the streaming-haired Gail, as a siren fishing in the sea; and the sea, represented by many frothing curls, was in the upper left hand corner, densely populated by foolish little gold fish, rushing eagerly to the dangling bait of the siren. Any one of the parties mentioned could have sued the *Planet* for libel; but they would not, and they would have been made highly ridiculous if they had—which was the joke of the whole matter, and left the metropolitan press more and more highly uncured: a right sturdily to be maintained in a land of free speech!

When Lucile Teasdale and Arly Fosdale arrived at Jim Sargent's house at ten o'clock, and had been let in at the side entrance, they found Gail dabbling her eyes with a powder puff, taken from a little black traveling bag which stood open at her side. Arlene was a second later than Lucile in claspings Gail in her arms, because she had to lift a traveling veil. The two girls expressed their condolence and their horror of the outrage, and volubly poured out more sympathy; then they sat down and shrieked with laughter.

"It's too awful for words!" gasped Lucile. "But it is funny, too."

Gail's chin quivered.

"There should be a law against such things," she broken-heartedly returned.

"I'll put the *Planet* out of business!" stormed Jim Sargent, stalking up and down the library, with his fists clenched and his face purple. "I'll bankrupt them!"

"The press is the paladium of our national liberty, Uncle Jim," drawled the soothing voice of Ted.

"Shucks, Gail!" suddenly remembered Lucile. "The big Faulker reception is this week, and your gown was to be so stunning. Don't go home!"

Mrs. Helen Davies cast on her feather-brained daughter a glance of severe reproof.

"Have you no sense of propriety, Lucile?" she warned. "Gail, very naturally, cannot remain here under the circumstances. It does great credit to her that,

immediately upon realizing this horrible occurrence, she decided to go home, and telegraphed to her mother, without consulting any of us, to remain where she was."

"I just wanted to go home," said Gail, her chin quivering.

"It'll all blow over, Gail," promised Uncle Jim, in deep distress because she was going so soon. If she had only stopped long enough to pack up, they might have persuaded her to stay. "Just forget it, and have a good time."

"Jim," ordered the stern voice of Aunt Helen, "will you be kind enough to see if anyone is out in front?"

"Certainly," agreed Jim, wondering why his wife's sister was suddenly so severe with him.

"It's time to start," called Ted.

The adieus were said. Aunt Grace, clasping Gail in her arms, began to sob, out of a full heart and a general need for the exercise. Gerald Fosland took the hand of his wife, and kissed it in most gallant fashion.

"I shall miss you dreadfully, my dear," he stated.

"I shall be thinking of you," responded Arlene, adjusting her veil.

Mrs. Davies drew Arlene into the drawing room.

"It was so sweet of you to agree to accompany Gail," she observed. "It would be useless to attempt to influence her now, but I look for you to bring her back in a week. Her prospects are really too brilliant to be interrupted by an unfortunate episode of this nature."

CHAPTER XV

But Why Was She Lonesome?

Everybody was at the train to meet Gail—just everybody in the world! It was midnight when the train rolled in, and, as she came toward the gate, the faces outside, with the high station lights beaming down upon their eagerness, were like a flashing dream of all the faces she had ever loved.

Of course there was her mother, a little stiff, a little sedate, a little reserved, but, under her calm exterior, fluttering

with a flood of pent-up emotion. There was her father, a particularly twinkling-eyed gentleman, a somewhat thinner, somewhat older, somewhat neater edition of Uncle Jim; and he had, of all things, her favorite collie, Taffy, dancing about at the end of his leash to greet her.

It was from her father that Gail had her vivacity and from her mother her faculty of introspection.

Dazed by the unexpected delight, and the pain, too, of seeing all these dear old faces, Gail was for picking them out in detail, when Taffy made a blur of them. Taffy, suddenly recognizing his playfellow in the throng, first deafened Miles Sargent with a series of welcoming barks, and then shot straight through the throng, and landed against Gail with the force of all his lively affection.

That was only the beginning of the impetuosity with which Gail was received at home. She had never realized that she had quite so many friends; even the people in the street seemed familiar. They looked more substantial and earnest and sincere and friendly, these people, than the ones with whom she had been recently associated. They were more polished in New York, more sure of themselves, more indifferent to the great mass of their fellow humanity; but here one could be trustful. It was so good to be home!

Of course Howard was there, just the same old Howard, and he bustled up to her with the same old air of proprietorship, quite as if nothing had ever happened to disturb their relations. It was he who took her by the arm and engineered her out to her father's car. At first she was puzzled by his air of having a right to lead her around, and then the reason flashed on her mind. Pride! Howard did not want their set to know that he was no longer drum major in the Sargent procession!

"There's a wad of roses at the house for you, Snapsy," her father informed her as the machine started. "They're from number one, I think."

"Number one?" puzzled Gail, who had taken a folding seat so that she might occasionally pat Taffy, sitting up sedately with the chauffeur.

"Miles!" protested Mrs. Sargent, trying to direct his gaze toward Arly.

"Edward E. Allison," grinned Gail's father. "He must be a very active gentleman. Probably telephoned his own florist in New York to telegraph Marty here to supply you. Nothing has arrived from the other eight."

Gail had a mad impulse to search for her time table. She remembered now—could she ever forget it—that her nine slaves had been numbered!

"This morning's *Planet* had a wonderful circulation here," her father went on. "I think everybody in town has seen it. For myself, I favor number five, the Reverend Smith Boyd, of—"

"Dad, I'll jump out of this car!"

"Number Six," pursued Gail's father relentlessly. "—Mrs. Fosland. I couldn't make out number six very well. I suppose you know him."

Arly shrieked.

"I can tell you about them," she volunteered, judging that this was perhaps the best way to relieve Gail's embarrassment. "Number one, the gentleman who sent the flowers, is a good-looking bachelor of forty-five, whose specialty is making big street-car companies out of little ones; and Gail hadn't been in New York a week, when he took the first vacation he's had in ten years. He'll probably go back to work to-morrow morning. He was the hero of the wreck!"

"No doubt a good provider," commented Mr. Sargent, gravely checking off number one.

Even Gail's mother was smiling now, as Arly babbled on with her descriptions of the nine slaves.

Somehow, Gail felt lonely, even with three cars of friends following her home as a guard of honor. Everything was the same; all her friends were steadfast in their affection, and she was overjoyed to be back among them; yet she was lonely. Who could explain it?

Here was Main Street, dear old busy Main Street, with its shops and its hotels and its brilliantly lighted drug stores. Now up the Avenue, the dear old wide Avenue, with its double rows of trees, and its smooth asphalt, glistening like sprinkling rain from the quartz sand im-

bedded in its surface, the darling Avenue, with the prosperous looking brown stone houses lining each side of the way, every house with its lawn and its shrubbery and its glass-doored vestibule. They were dear houses, every one, ever so much more personal than the heartless residences of New York; and *her friends* lived in them! It was so good to be home!

She became more excited now. There was their own place just ahead, occupying nearly half the block, and slightly larger than the others! It was brilliantly lighted from the basement to the attic, and all the servants were either on the front steps or peeping from around the corner of the house.

Of course, her friends piled into the house after her, a whole chattering mob of them, and, late as the hour was, Vivian Jennings opened the piano and rattled into "Auld Lang Syne," which the company sang with a ringing zest. The tears filled Gail's eyes, as she listened. They were such faithful, whole-hearted people back here at home! It was good to go away, now and then, just for the joy of coming back home again; but one should not go too often. After all, this was a better life!

They had sandwiches, and olives, and cake, and cookies and nuts and fruits and bonbons, and coffee, and champagne. Everybody was excited, walking around with a sandwich in one hand and an olive in the other, joking with Gail, and complimenting her, and teasing her, but, in every word and look and action, showing that they loved her.

She had a new knowledge of them, an understanding of what it is like to have a whole circle of friends who have grown up from childhood together. They understood each other, and knew each other's weaknesses and faults, so that they were not shocked when they saw evidences of them; and they knew each other's virtues, so that they did not overestimate anything and look for too much; and they were dependent upon each other and knew it, and they were loyal; that was

it! Loyal! Loyal to the very core! It was good, so good to be home!

No one thought anything about it when Howard Clemmens stayed behind, after all the rest had gone home. Howard had always done that.

Howard was distressed in his mind about several things, and, out of an habitual acquiescence in his old assumption of leadership, and because she was tired, and because she was tender of thought toward all her old friends, she answered his very direct questions.

Yes, she had finished her visit. No, she was not engaged. That atrocious newspaper article had only been a regular Sunday paper social sensation. They fastened that sort of story on some one at least once a year.

These little matters settled, Howard was himself again. He was very glad that Gail had returned to her normal mode of existence, and now that all this foolishness was over, Howard took the earliest opportunity to mention the little matter between them. Would Gail reconsider her answer to the question he had asked her in New York? He informed her fully as to the state of his affections, which had not changed in the least, and he rather expected that this magnanimous attitude on his part would meet with melting appreciation. He was very much astonished that it did not, and displeased when Gail refused him again. Confound it, he had not given her time to settle down!

Gail was only slightly troubled when he bade her good-night. Somehow, Howard seemed rather colorless of late. He was a dear, good boy; but she was not the kind of girl he needed.

With only as much trouble on her brow as could be smoothed away by her finger-tips, Gail joined her father and mother. Somehow, that inexplicable feeling of loneliness returned to her, in the midst of their most dear intimacy. What was it? No one can form far ties, without leaving behind some enduring thread of spiritual communication—for better or for worse!

The next installment of "The Ball of Fire" will be in the February Red Book, on all news-stands January 23rd.

"Well, d'you love
the fellow?" asked
Blanding sharply.



The Eager Prey

By GEORGE BRONSON-HOWARD

Author of "Snobs," "The Eternal Cycle," etc.

Illustrated by R. F. James

If he wasn't "there" with the coin to
play,
He'd make a talk to some youth
blasé
And mine host would spread for
the eager prey,
And give him the steer-per-cent.
Ballad of Blanding.

THE reason why all people, even the most fastidious, love melodrama is because Nature herself is melodramatic—although one seldom catches her at it. Her plots are too finely drawn out for the average eye to connect incidents that seem totally unconnected. Hence, much talk of an universe without a purpose—on its face contradictory, the one huge basic fact upon which all philosophies and religions are built being that of the planetary system revolving steadily about the sun.

Occasionally, by some lucky accident, all the facts in certain cases become known; then we are privileged to see how petty are human-made plots compared to one of Nature's. Such an one is the basis of the history of Dyke Sturte-

vant and Milly Malone; and were we actuated by purely mercenary motives, we would make it into a melodrama one week of whose royalties would yield more than any magazine could afford to pay for this story.

II

Milly Malone had been on Broadway a very short time before Dyke Sturtevant saw and admired her. Many times had the house manager sought her with news of the spoken admiration of young Mr. This and old Mr. That; but Milly had fallen into a habit of saying "No," and continued, though she really yearned for the brilliantly lighted supper places, the taxicabs, and the cabaret dances that colored her companion's stories. Of late there has been much rubbish written about stage girls having no more temptations than others; yet to any metropolitan theatre during the run of a successful "girl" show gravitate the rich idlers from all cities—first, because the primitive entertainment there afforded is

best suited their mental incapacities, second, because it is part of their system to have, just as they have expensive polo-ponies for daylight amusement, expensive females for nocturnal supper-parties—and many were quite willing that Milly should be expensive.

Milly, rejecting this generosity, gained a growing unpopularity among her sisters of the dressing-room. But, observing her running for a street-car in the rain, or in freezing weather muffling up her thin, girlish neck with a cheap fur stole when proffered taxicabs offered luxurious protection, the "Johns," though apt to call her a qualified lunatic, respected her pluck and told others to disprove coarse generalities circulated about the chorus. Among those who thus heard of Milly was Dyke Sturtevant; and, hearing, he laughed loudly:

"Pooh and pish! Likewise tush!" said Dyke. "Also, Bah!" The other insisted that he was quoting personal experience: had he not so proffered on a snowy night too, Holmes had been along. There had been Anthony and Barkwynd and Stetson, also, and others: why, it was notorious.

Dyke continued to deride. "Coarse work," he explained. "Bet me I won't have her out to dinner in a week?"

"It's like finding money," returned his fellow-clubman. So the curtain rose on Act II of the life of Mr. Sturtevant.

III

But we are hardly concerned with the mechanics of the plot—rather, to show what went on behind the scenes; therefore, we must transfer our attention to Blanding, who was to some extent the master-mechanic. Blanding was as well-known to Fifth Avenue as to Broadway. He maintained membership in a semi-exclusive club, and was one of those persons whom the vague description of "little brothers of the rich" seems to suit. Yet show-girls instinctively regarded him as one of themselves and made no attempt to extort money from him by fictitious stories, or otherwise. "He's a wise one," one often whispered

to another, as a signal she too might drop the wearisome task of holding an unnatural pose. Touts never offered him "stable-tips;" there was never any eagerness shown by professional gamblers for him to enter a game. Those "on the make" looked elsewhere; there was a shrewd suspicion among them that despite his air of London assurance, Cork Street clothes, and Harvard accent, he was like themselves.

Some even knew the truth about Blanding, but so far apart are the worlds of Broadway and the Avenue, so well sustained was the principle of "never wising-up a sucker," that no whisper of Blanding's connection with Barney Bond's gambling house was ever wafted east of Sixth Avenue. As a matter of fact, Blanding owned a half-interest in this house, where none was admitted unless of the sort that wears dress clothes more than occasionally. Blanding had supplied most of the patrons as well as most of the original investment.

Ever since Dyke Sturtevant had inherited the fortune of his uncle, head of the banking house of the same name, Blanding's eye had been upon him; but for some reason—probably because Dyke had been kept on short commons during his school and university years—he had shown no chance of profiting so expensive a place as Barney's; twice visiting it, as he had visited others, he had played with ten and twenty dollar chips only, yawned after a brief space, and departed. Yet Blanding knew the instinct must be within him—Dyke's father had plunged on unlisted securities as would no man not crazy with belief in his luck. It is doubtful if Blanding would have had the cruelty to awaken an instinct so terrible had not Dyke run amuck along the Nightless Lane, ever since his grandfather died, showing an utter disregard for the harm he did others. Subconsciously at least, this gave Blanding an excuse to treat him as an enemy. But it was not until Sturtevant came to be seen about with Milly Malone that Blanding saw a chance worth acting upon.

Blanding used Sturtevant's trick to meet Milly, giving not a supper, but a

"tea" at his apartments, and bidding some girls to bring Milly on pain of his displeasure. But Milly, having broken her rule once, was not difficult to persuade—particularly, as it was Blanding, whose praises all chanted. He was never "fresh;" you must make advances if any were to be made; and, to those who know women, it will not seem strange when we say that this was a far more effectual way to win them than the usual one. And Milly fell under his spell as other girls had done—not that she loved him, but, somehow, she trusted him; and he had no such difficulty in arranging a future *tête-à-tête*, as had Sturtevant several weeks previous. Blanding's was for the following afternoon at an hotel where he would be likely to encounter neither his acquaintances of the "smart" world nor the other; consequently, without interruptions, he was able, by exerting himself, to establish what was almost a friendship—which permitted him, before dark, to approach the subject of Dyke Sturtevant.

"You will pardon me, Milly," said Blanding, "but if I am wrong, correct me. You came here to-day in a taxicab and it's waiting for you: in fact, it's always waiting. It takes you shopping to places where you have charge accounts and can order any amount of clothes. It takes you to restaurants where you can entertain your girl friends at tea or dinner—also charge accounts. And you have been invited to move from your boarding-house to a charming apartment. When it grows too warm here, an European trip for yourself and maid."

Milly was chalky white. "How dare

you?" she gasped. "Come," said Blanding, kindly, "I'm talking to you like a father." She averted her eyes. "How *could* he tell anybody. And he was so decent, so kind, never saying anything that anybody couldn't respect him for."

"You do him an injustice," said Blanding, softly. "He never told anybody."

"Oh, he must have," she declared passionately. "You couldn't have known unless. But it was just because he had more money than he knew what to do with."

"I know," smiled Blanding. "He knew you were a good girl and wanted to show you there were some good *men* left. It was because you *were* good that he was attracted to you." (And, God forgive him, that was true enough!) "Somehow, you imagined he wasn't the kind to fall in love quickly. But if you tried to be the kind of girl he *could* love, why—he didn't exactly say he'd marry you, but—that was what you thought, wasn't it?"

For answer, the girl bent over, her face meeting her handkerchief, for which she had fumbled. "Don't, my dear *child*," protested Blanding. "People will think I'm abusing you. How did I *know*? Because it's his *system*. Want me to show you?"

They were driven to another restaurant, from entering which she shrank instinctively. "It's only for a moment," Blanding assured her. "And it's necessary." Within was a painted world where, before nightfall, were already the drunk and disorderly. Outside was the fading glory of a winter's afternoon, but within, Nature was allowed to play no tricks with complexions, the



Her eyes had once been compared by a poet to woodland pools; now the pools had dried and the starlight was gone.

lights matching them. Entering it was as if to step into a Roman hell.

At tables sat women of small fascination, striving their best for a semblance of gaiety, and for the most part, failing even to produce a passable counterfeit. Among them was one as vivid as the poppies on her hat; why was she there? A closer glance revealed that her charm was almost entirely due to cosmetics, although she had the small head of the Golden Age Greek. Her eyes had once been compared by a poet to woodland pools in the sedge with starlight shining through; now the pools had dried and the starlight was gone. Her little Grecian nose twitched like the beak of a bird of prey. The expert would have told you she had taken a larger dose than usual of her habitual heroin—which, equally with deadening physical pain and thoughts of the past, provides rapid transit to eternity.

"That's why we came," said Blanding. "That girl! Six years since Sturtevant met her. A brainless little flapper, but a beauty. Went home every night; couldn't bribe her to take a drink: 'I guess you don't know a lady when you see one.' 'You wouldn't respect me if I smoked a cigarette'—that kind. Kept 'steady company' with a young book-keeper. Had their Harlem flat all picked out and went on trips to the furniture houses. But, meanwhile, other girls got more elegant elevator apartments on the 'drive' and in the 'seventies.' Silk curtains and Oriental rugs and Louis Quinze furniture and dainty damask, and so on, and they made her mighty discontented with what installment houses sell to the righteous. Hated to feel her rough pony-skin coat, too, after touching other girls' seals or chinchillas. Still, she'd have gone through if Sturtevant hadn't come along. He gave her everything he's given you. Then—know what his game is?"

Milly shook her head dumbly, although, instinctively, she knew well enough. She had been unable to remove her eyes from the girl whose history she was hearing: a history that might have been her own.

"Why, he tells you that he's married:

unhappy, of course, wife a Catholic, and, although since he's met you, he's begged for a divorce, nothing doing. So he is helpless, having done all in honor that anybody could. See the point? He's lonely, must have love. You're his true wife before High Heaven—what means the mumbling of a priest? Well, all that's well enough for sensible women who are able to see through a man's words into his mind and know that he really loves them—but he's a connoisseur in women as others are in wines. And the sort of girls he selects are the sort that, respectability *gone*, all's gone: that's the religious temperament—your temperament too, I think."

He waved the waiter away, indicating their untouched liqueurs. "Some girls really get to care for him—why wouldn't they? He's handsome, clever talker, fairy prince with a magic wand—and they fall for the love talk. But, even without love, they fall anyway. Why? Because he never plays his hand until the girl can't go back to boarding-house grub, street-cars, and dingy furnished rooms. So, when he says, 'Good-by, forever; I am going to Africa to hunt lions, or India to hunt tigers; I hope one of them gets me,'—then she sees plainly that this means giving up apartment, maid, taxicab, charge accounts. For—observe this particularly—he has never insulted her with actual money; his jewelry has been Lalique stuff, expensive, as *art nouveau*, but worthless to raise money on. No solitaires, no cash. Do you see the point, *now?*"

"I—think I do," said Milly, gasping. "Let's go." She seemed suddenly to choke in that atmosphere, heavy with cheap perfumes and dead cigarettes; where the other girl sat was only a burning mist....

Blanding told the driver to go around the Park. "So," he went on, as the car swung away from the curb, "because she can't get the luxuries he's made her think she needs, any other way—she tells him not to go. But, after a while, his artistic soul wants something unexplored. So she loses the luxuries anyway. It's only a question of months—maybe a year; and though she has a few more

clothes, a few more toilet-trifles in gold, she needs cash just as much.

"What happens? Another man. If she's a sentimental idiot, like the poppy girl, she takes to drinking, then to cocaine, heroin, or morphine; and soon she loses all attraction for the Sturtevant sort. Then she hits the tologgan—and that place back there's not the bottom, either."

Milly Malone burst into violent shivering and caught Blanding's hand—then into wild sobbing. "There, there, little one: I understand," he said paternally, patting her palm. "Thinking how you'll hate to give up all those luxuries yourself, even after a few weeks? Well, you don't have to. *You don't have to.*"

She sat upright, tears and terrors forgotten in amazement. "After what you've told me?"

"I've warned you," returned Blanding. "So: beat his game—understand?"

Apparently, she did not. "Well, d'you *love* the fellow?" asked Blanding sharply. Apparently, *No* again. "Well," he said, "some day you may read a philosopher named Faber, who says God sent the poor as eagles to strip the rich. Farther back, in a grand old Book that nobody reads any more you will see this passage: 'Live by the sword, perish by the sword.' The trouble with the poor is that they're slaves of words. Blackmail for instance. It never seems to occur to anybody that whoever can be blackmailed should have been blackballed—or that blackmailers only exact what the man ought to have paid society. Cursed with sentimentalism too, the poor are; and sentimentalism is the greatest enemy of reform. So, being poor, you're a slave of words and sentimental. So I suppose you wont turn Sturtevant's sword against him."

So scornful was he that Milly, more from a wish to retain his respect than anything else—and not half understanding—hastened to assure him that she *would*. "Only what can I *do*?" she asked fretfully. "*Me?*"

"I'd tell you if I thought I wasn't wasting my time," said Blanding.

A picture of the poppy girl crossed her vision. "You wont be wasting it,"

said she, snapping her sharp little teeth together.

On his explanation, the curtain fell upon Act II of the life of Dyke Sturtevant.

IV

One of Nature's ironies is to punish us through our good emotions, not our evil ones. One intent on evil is careful, alert, watchful; and, anticipating harm, it seldom befalls him. But, intent on good, following a heart instead of a head, the heart is easily betrayed because one wants it to be. *Strephon* does not wish to be told that *Amaryllis* hates him, nor an infatuated husband his wife; both prefer to believe that to them alone is given some astral knowledge not possible to material minds. So Milly might have played her game with half her skill; for Nature, making a long arm, had caught up Master Sturtevant, and he was in love at last. He had gone into Milly's case on a bet, true, but before seeing her; and afterwards, he had followed his usual system because where was there a better one? Every effect in it had been planned to suggest sincerity; and now he was in the peculiar position of a playwright who finds himself living a situation of his own play and using his careful dramatic phrasing because no natural dialogue half so good suggests itself.

A curious situation indeed. Often words leaped to his lips quite sincerely, but he blushed and abandoned them, remembering their unhallowed use in the past. Like all men who help to make the world worse, he insisted strongly that no hint of evil be associated with this one real affair. He resumed boyish idealism and chivalry toward women; for truly he had possessed both. The worst villain is most frequently but a betrayed idealist. Because the women of his early days had been other than of an Arthurian idyl, Sturtevant had gone to a Byronic extreme. Some men have minds so very juvenile that they can be only *Sir Galahads* or *Don Juans*—both the conceptions of schoolboys. He had never really cared for *Don Juanism*—had been cynically daring women to live up to his

"Polly Van Reypen wanted particularly to go to that new roulette place," Blanding told them.



ideal. If the girl of the poppies or any of the others had brought out the better part of him, he would have been ashamed to cut adrift. Bringing out his worst, they gave him an excuse, and, finally tired, not so much of them as of himself and his surroundings, he would go a-questing elsewhere. *Don Juan* sought a Grail as truly as *Galahad*—his from which to quaff a nectar of ideal love. Sturtevant had defended his system by telling himself such girls were bound to go that way some time.

But he told himself no such tales of Milly. He drifted along, much in her company, wishing he could bear her away from the iniquitous atmosphere of musical-comedy and of Broadway. With his consent, she was never permitted on the Nightless Lane except for the theatre. When they dined or supped he took her to Canary's or the St. Gothard, defiantly meeting the eyes of his Avenue friends and inviting their criticism.

This attitude made it difficult to suggest anything so alien as a visit to a roulette-table. But Blanding managed it. Protesting, Sturtevant had secured a table at Sydenham's for the celebrated Broadway New Year festivities. Milly had opened her ingenuous eyes wide when asking, "I've never seen it, fancy: and in New York all my life hearing and reading of it! I,"—she gave him a smile, the effect carefully calculated—"never met a man before I'd trust to take me."

She spoke to him always with clipped precision, never a natural phrase escaping her; she knew the speech of her childhood was not to be trusted; and having made a certain impression, she wished to retain it—even going so far as to tell him of her convent-school education, her father having been a man of



some position who had failed in business. It had never occurred to her to deceive anyone as to this before, and to keep up the illusion made her uncomfortable in his presence, desirous of being in it just as little as possible—something that often happens between such girls and such men and helps destroy any possibility of them ever understanding one another. As often as she could manage it, another girl accompanied them, and the two would have much fun afterwards between munches of his expensive candy, chuckling over the way he had swallowed her lies.

Ethel accompanied them on this New

Year's night, and that was part of Blanding's plot; for, at the height of the festivities, she recognized Blanding himself (Milly was not supposed to know him), apparently searching for some one. She sent over a waiter and made a point of his joining them. He was looking for certain people, it appeared: some men and women Sturtevant knew. "Polly Van Reypen wanted, particularly, to go to that new roulette-place," Blanding told them, "and you have to have somebody with you the people there know. Polly made such a bother about it, I cut another party and here she's gone. Oh, well"—he looked at

his watch—"I didn't realize how late it was."

"A roulette-salon—for women?" said Ethel, clapping her hands. She was an experienced one, was Ethel, and although her childish ways and baby face did not lay her open to any such suspicion, she was on Blanding's permanent pay-roll. He had sent her to Milly. "Goody! goody! goody!" she exclaimed. "Take me, Mr. Blanding—please." Blanding laughed tolerantly. "These were rich women, child," he said. "I wouldn't lead anybody else into temptation, even by request." Ethel's face grew doleful. "Oh! it would have been such fun, wouldn't it, Milly? Just like the stories you read of Monte Carlo. I never knew there *was* a place women could go to."

Milly's face brightened. She had been sulking, purposefully, telling Sturtevant what a disappointment the celebration had been. "Let's go, Mr. Sturtevant," she said, laying a little paw of a hand on the arm of his dress-coat. "Please—maybe we'd have some fun, *there*." He was thrilled by her touch. "On one condition," he returned in a low tone, "—that, for the last time, you call me *Mr. Sturtevant*. How often have I asked you?"

"Dyke," she amended, making a pretty little mouth.

He turned to Blanding to be assured of the sort of people who went there. "Not—this sort," returned Blanding, contemptuously, nodding toward a table surrounded by celebrities of the cabarets. "It's hard to get into—like a good club, almost. Laura Allen took *me* there." The second prominent young matron's name was sufficient to convince Sturtevant that the atmosphere of the place would not clash with that of his ideal. As a matter of fact, there had been no such place until Blanding's first serious conversation with Milly. Then Barney Bond had pressed into additional service the house next door, heretofore used only for millionaires' private poker parties. Not a hundred people knew this sober-looking brownstone dwelling had any connection with the equally sober-looking, but quite notorious one next door. So

Blanding had Barney move in a roulette-table, some paintings, statuary and a buffet, and, after Blanding telephoned that New Year's night while Sturtevant was paying the supper-check, bright lights reflected on the crystal and cut glass, illuminated the green cloth.

Then and there Milly developed the gambling habit—coming the next night, every night; and, since ladies were provided with black lace masks by the management, and the patronage seemed confined to those desirous of hiding their identities, Sturtevant had no great objection to her childish amusement over winning small sums. For she seldom lost—nor, apparently, did the other masked ladies and their dress-coated escorts, for the very good reason that all were employees of Bond and Blanding, on the pay-roll as "steerers" outside, "shillabers" within; a "steerer" is one who brings customers, and half the pretty show-girls with "Avenue" acquaintances are that, receiving a large share of their friends' losses. Blanding had never used women for shillabers before; but many of his male steerers had been so employed next door, betting large sums and always winning larger ones, to encourage losers disgusted with luck, thus reviving hope and renewing play. Men and women alike were shillabers here in the women's room; Ethel herself, her coiffure and gown new, often stood, later, alongside Sturtevant, who did not know her behind her lace mask. He imagined every one of these silent winning players to have names in the "Social Register."

In such an electric atmosphere of luck, then, it was not strange that Sturtevant soon took a hand, and he was the only one who cost the firm of Bond and Blanding anything in winnings—all the rest being handed back before the players left the house. But soon Sturtevant, flushed with luck and thoroughly surrendering himself to the intoxication of chance, laid down his accumulations on a single number: his first real bet. The croupier with his long-handled wooden rake pushed back all but one bill. "The maximum is ten dollars *en plan*," he said mildly. He spun. "*Quinze, noir, pair et*

passee," he said, designating number, color, and so forth, bets on which were to be paid, among them Sturtevant's. The whole game had been played to reach this point.

Sturtevant gathered in his winnings, grumbling at the amount: with his luck he would have won thousands. "What a piker's game," he said in disgust. The croupier shrugged his shoulders. "For men, maybe," he said, "not for ladies. The house next door may please *you* better."

The gambling spirit is a curious thing. It possesses one not entirely for gain—else why do those have it who hire clerks to clip coupons? It is a sort of religion rather, a subconscious belief that one has established communication with the spirit-world—has been especially favored with prophetic instinct, which, persistently followed, will triumphantly defeat materialism and the statistics regarding the laws of chance. And to be under this spell is to disregard all but blind belief. Gambling is the apotheosis of faith: no Fox's martyr could be more of a fanatic than a gambler. Once aroused, Blanding knew the rest was easy. And, finally, it was aroused. Sturtevant asked Milly to wait, and plunged to the street and next door.

The game, which had broken up immediately after Dyke's departure, had been abandoned by the yawning shillabers long before he returned. Milly had gone home. Stricken with remorse for his discourtesy, he realized it was dawn; he had played five hours and lost twenty-five thousand dollars.

Never mind; he would get it all back to-morrow. That was only his punishment because he hadn't gone next door sooner, while Luck was with him: why, if he had only been in Barney Bond's, the croupier would not have pushed away those three hundred odd dollars and he would have won, instead of three sixty, over eleven thousand. If man could make for his own inconsistency half the excuses he makes for Luck's, he would have no conscience.

After that it was too pitifully easy; but neither Blanding nor Milly got as much of the loot as Blanding had ex-

pected. Sturtevant went from house to house—was soon a familiar in them all. Finally, to recoup, he went after bigger gambles in Wall Street. Then he evolved a system: an absolutely logical and flawless system before which all the Laws of Chance must fall like Jericho's walls. At this point his history ceases to be interesting.

IV

In a block where gambling-houses abound is the rear entrance of Sydenham's, an inconspicuous door on a dark street which does not suggest even a remote connection with the brightly lighted restaurant on Broadway—a theory evidently held by Dyke Sturtevant too, on his first visit by the back way. It opens on a dimly lighted hall where, faintly, can be heard the music and gayety of the Broadway side, the rag-time from private dining-rooms, mingled with the kitchen's clatter. Dyke made his way to the stairs; and there, under a bracket light, he was recognized and halted at the door of an upstairs room.

"You can't go in there, sir," said a waiter-captain just coming out.

Sturtevant smiled at the tribute to his impeccable dress-clothes, shining hat and shoes. "Why not?" he asked.

A man, in similar attire to his, passed swiftly out of the room. "He too?" asked Dyke, astounded. The man belonged to at least two good clubs. "If he's at this," he said more to himself than to the waiter, "I needn't be ashamed." He touched the waiter's arm: "Why did you stop me from going in there?"

The waiter regarded him uneasily. "I thought p'raps somebody might 'ave blown the gaff—that you came to raise a row." His tone had ceased to be respectful, became comrade-like. "Well, Mr. Sturtevant, as you remarked, there's just as good in there and will be. We all 'as ups and downs, sir." He opened the door as one man to another. Sturtevant passed in.

Here was only one waiter and he was dozing. Mostly, the patrons—though quite as expensively dressed as any be-

Then and there Milly developed the gambling habit.



low—were eating supper as people one of whose regular meals is at this hour. There was very little drinking; on most tables stood bottles of vichy or mineral waters. The air of those who supped was not unlike that of business-folk at lunch. Men and women seemed acquaintances of long-standing, all appearances of coquetry abandoned. Some men even read the papers; others wrote letters. It was not unlike an ordinary European café—not the sort foreigners frequent, but the European's club where women are permitted only if they do not interfere. There was even a couple playing (not dominoes, 'tis true; one can't have everything) double-Canfield.

But Sturtevant saw none of these

things—only Milly Malone in a secluded corner finishing supper and talking to Ethel and to a man Sturtevant had often seen along Broadway. He stopped suddenly as one who has received a blinding blow. When he recovered, the psychic force of his shock had communicated itself to Milly and she stared in terrified dismay. Sturtevant continued, mechanically, as one who is pushed or led, and sank into a chair opposite her.

"Now, Dyke," said Ethel calmly, "don't make a scene. Who let you in here? Who told you? Where've you been for the past six months?" She strove to make her tone casual. The other man said something unimportant about the queer results from the Juarez race track

that day. Milly tried to speak once, twice, then gave it up. It was almost as difficult for Sturtevant to find his voice, and when he did it was hardly his own, but a queer, choking one nobody had ever heard before:

"To answer your questions chronologically, Ethel. First: I let *myself* in. Second, Harvey Gold sent me. Third, I've been in a sanitarium."

The last was not surprising to Ethel. But that Harvey Gold, proprietor of another place like Barney Bond's, should have sent this pigeon he had so often plucked here, in the midst of his pluckers! Sturtevant understood her bewilderment:

"You see," he explained, laughing harshly, "I've *joined* you. I tried to borrow but Gold said 'earn it.' So I took him a nice young man who belongs to my club and I'm waiting here until Harvey 'phones me to come and get my—what-do-you-call-it—it's my first experience, you see."

"Steerer's end? Steer-per-cent?" suggested the other man, smiling. He took this as a good cue to leave them, for he perceived private matters were brewing.

Sturtevant looked at Milly. She was stony-white.

"Still at it?" he asked in a light voice that was very ugly.

"How long have you known?" asked Ethel, white also.

"Known?" returned Sturtevant, his laugh uglier than his voice. "Known? I was still thinking she was the pearl of purity when I came in here: it was losing *her* I minded, not the money. All I've gone through in the past two years didn't hurt as much as the last two minutes." He looked at Milly again. "*You.*" he said. "Just think of it, *you!* Why, I wanted to marry *you.*"

"You can cut all that stuff out, Dyke," said Ethel. "She had your number when you started—knew all about that marriage-stuff and how you pulled it on all the others. This time, *you* lost. So be a game sport and don't whine. You only got *yours.*"

"My God," said Sturtevant hoarsely, "look at me! Why would I lie *now* when I haven't got a chance. I tell you it was

on the square. I wanted to *marry* her." He laughed harshly. "Oh! that's the funny part of it: She was giving *her* money to those harpies, her *own* money. She could have had every cent I owned. *Her own money.*" Something in his tone carried conviction. Ethel looked at Milly, horror-stricken. This was ghastly. She had deliberately robbed herself of a fortune.

"Well, I *must* say," she gasped, catching Milly's hand, "isn't life *horrible*? Oh, Mil! And I *helped* you. Me!" It seemed to her, a child of dire poverty, that this was the most terrible tragedy that had ever happened. Milly might have had everything her heart desired; and here she was sitting in the "steerers' room" at Sydenham's.

But—such is the strange psychology of the feminine mind—Milly was not thinking of the money at all. She was remembering the many times Dyke had said he loved her, and how she had forced herself to remember the poppy girl. Since Dyke had explained, a few moments before, the brakes Blanding's first interview had applied to her natural emotions were released, and now she recalled Dyke's tender thoughtfulness for her: how, motoring, and caught in a chilly wind one day, he had taken off his coat and held it, despite her protests, about her thin-charmeuse-covered shoulders. The action, the thrill of his strength and touch, had brought a queer tingling sensation that she had choked down. Sometimes when he had sat, silent, she remembered an almost uncontrollable impulse to ruffle his sleekly groomed hair. Once, dancing one of the new tangoes in which she must sway back into his arms, she knew when she closed her eyes her pulse had beaten so rapidly she feared he must hear it. At another time....but there were numberless others, each emotion killed before it could bud, either by determined resolve to remember the poppy girl or because she must use all her wits to beat him at his game. It was not strange she hadn't suspected it before; but it was the simple explanation of why, when Sturtevant hit the toboggan, she had striven with him, begged him to discontinue gambling,

"Say you love me, then," he would return, fiercely. But there he was up to old tricks again and she must defend herself. And, then, when he had disappeared, leaving no word, she had moped, had desired to be alone, to weep in secret. She had told herself with many stamps of the foot that she was low-spirited, needed a change—any explanation save the obvious one. So that was why she was not thinking about money. Those who know womenkind, therefore, will not wonder at her first words to him:

"Ethel, tell him how I happened to be here to-night?" With that remarkable thing called, in women, instinct, she knew anything might be forgiven that had not to do with other men. "Tell him, Ethel, tell him," she insisted feverishly.

Ethel's mind left money and, swiftly, did the right thing by the same incomprehensible process: "Why, this is *my* party, Dyke," she explained. "Milly

wont go anywhere. She's like she used to be before you met her. So I happened to have business here. Oh yes," she broke off to be defiant. "I *am* waiting for the same reason *you* are, Dyke. But she *isn't*. I just 'phoned her I was lonely—to come have supper while I waited. She hasn't been out with *anybody* since you disappeared. You needn't glare so; she *hasn't*."

Curiously—Dyke could never have explained why—half the horror of the situation left him. Milly had "steered" him, yes; but that lost most of its first shock now he was of her world, no longer an outsider, and realized how bitterly simple it was to descend to such practices when money was needed. He *had* been a beast to those other girls. So Milly had known of it—no wonder she hadn't believed him, poor kid, no wonder! But—oh the pity of it—if she only had believed!



"I've been so miserable without you."

"Milly, I *did* love you," he choked, winking hard to keep his eyes clear.

"*Did?*" she asked, dully.

"*Do.* Always shall, but,"—hopelessly—"what's the use now? I haven't a nickel. Not a nickel. Every red cent is gone! We always *get* it, don't we?"

Milly's hand slipped into his. "Oh Dyke," she said. He stared at her, unbelievably. Ethel arose, swiftly, and departed. Milly was crying. "Oh Dyke, Dyke, Dyke!" she wept. "I'm so sorry. But was it *my* fault, *was* it, *was* it?"

And, then, with sudden ferocity:

"I wont have you stopping here waiting for Harvey Gold. I've got money, your money; you don't *need* to do anything like that. I wont let you. You come with me, come right away. I wont have you here."

She even forgot to say good-night to Ethel. In the taxicab, she put both arms around him and cried all the way to her apartment; but somehow, both were strangely happy. At her door, when he hesitated, she clung to him:

"Come early to-morrow, Dyke. I've been so miserable without you. I can scarcely bear to see you go."

V

In the varieties, Mr. and Mrs. Sturtevant have achieved much success with their little playlet, "At the Foot of the Moon-Path," written by Dyke himself, after Milly had urged that in vaudeville only could they both work without enforced separations, or idleness for either, and after he had condemned as too ridiculous all the "sketches" and *levens de ridicaux* submitted. Hers had been one eye that saw the patent probability of the dissatisfaction of variety's audiences with cheap playlets, with "house" scenery and props. A high-priced scenic-artist had been told expense was not to be considered; they carried a special electrician for their light effects—their wisdom

apparent when their "opening" always got a "hand." Milly wears gowns specially designed and executed by a world-famous *atelier*, and so do the other women of the company, while he sees that the men's dress-clothes are cut after his own pattern; and while, of course, low-salaried actors cannot be expected to look like him—to the dress-coat born—still, the whole affair gives an excellent simulation of an incident that might have happened to "smart" people in surroundings *à la mode*. And how the bourgeois soul hungers for such glimpses! How useful the language learned, to parrot to others, the hints on what the "real sort" wear. The patrons of the circuits look forward eagerly to the return, each year, of those headliners, Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Sturtevant.

But Dyke, off the stage, drops all the manners of aristocracy as delineated on. He takes an odd pleasure in meeting the "rough-necks" of the profession on an equal footing, and in "wise-cracking" stuff" he excels them all. Abysmal is his contempt for the rich.

"I tell you," he often says, "they don't know anything about *life*. How can they, with an army camping on their door-steps from birth, trying to get their dough away? The unluckiest bunch in the world, I tell you. And they never get wise unless they're taken for the 'works' like I was."

"Oh hush, Dyke," Milly will say. And to the listener: "Isn't he awful?" And she kisses him to prove it. He never has to ask, and she never expects to get anything in return—no hat, no new frock, no gold-mesh handbag, or allowance-money, nothing—which, if you know your feminine psychology, is precisely why her kisses are so numerous. If it were otherwise, she might save them as special marks of favor for those occasions when her husband's gratitude would yield the necessary financial returns.



The COLLEEN in the RED CLOAK

By KENNETT HARRIS

Author of "Managing Raimond," etc.

Illustrated by Norman Borchardt

MR. MULREADY, philosopher, poet, friend of youth and man of experience, occupied his customary seat on the front steps of the McGonigal Fireproof Apartments, taking the cool of the evening. The young man in the black calico shirt who sat opposite had just finished a tender confidence regarding a fair being whom he designated as "some swell skirt," and whose swellness seemed to place her in the regions of the unattainable; so at least the young man thought. Mingled with the evening cool came a whiff from the smoking kettles of the overtime asphalt gang at the head of the street, and Mr. Mulready's nostrils expanded and his visage wrinkled to the verge of his still red whisker-fringes in a

smile of pleasure. Then he sighed and the young man in the black calico shirt echoed the pensive exhalation with a melancholy that brought the twinkle back to the elder's blue eyes.

"Sure, I know, Jamesey," said Mr. Mulready, sympathetically. "The thoughts of the both av us is on what we cannot have an' what we wud not want if we had ut, 'tis like. Whin I get the reek av the ashphilt, I think av the turf smoke down-blown from a stone chimney at the fut av the big hill at Fodry. Manny's the time I've thought av the grand red glow av the fire I'd sit by there, an' wish meself back at ut; but whin I had me wish— Well, I'll tell ye av that some time. Annyway, I know that the steam heat is better for

me ould bones whin the winthry blasts is blowin' than ahl the turf fires that iver blacked a pot botthom, an' I'm as contint as a man can be . . . away from Fodry.

"But the red is an illegant color, Jamesey," Mr. Mulready resumed, after a reflective pause. "In ut's place, on the hearthstones or the cheeks av a gurl 'tis mighty attrhtractive, so ut is; an' that's what comes into me mind as I luk at ye an' consider the foolishness that ye show. Will I tell ye the story av Lanty O'Brien an' the colleen wid the red cloak? Ut might do ye good—as far as the wise word weighs wid wandering wits, if no more; an' 'twill take your mind off your troubles for the while. I'll not say 'tis a true tale ayther, for there's thim continds that 'twas a drame av Lanty's or a *pishogue* that was cast upon him. Yet there's rayson in ut an' there can be no rayson widout truth or truth widout rayson.

"Well, the lad Lanty was a quare O'Brien, so he was, for fair wather was drink for him an' ye'd have said that he'd the love av nayther fight nor frolic, nor an eye for the kind bright eyes that lukked afther him as he wint to mass or market. He was a well seemin' lad, ye'll mind, wid a pair of broad shoulders an' a fine head bechune thim. He had sthrong arms an' grand legs—which was his good luck—to carry his sthraight body. Sound in wind an' limb, he was, widout vice; but quare, I tell ye.

"Whin there was fun to the fore at the castle that the O'Briens had on the big hill, Lanty, as like as not, wud be settin' on some point av rocks a half mile away wid his back to the gay lights an' his face to the heaving say, his ears closed to the squeal av the pipes an' the shoutin' av the j'yful an' intoxicated rivillers, an' takin' note av only the music av the wathers on the shingle. Or it might be that he'd paddle out in the path av the moonshine in a little *pookawn*, which, ye'll mind, was a boat av skins over wicker, which they had in thim ould ancient days. Sure I've seen thim mesilf, for that matther. And as he paddled, he'd sing till the merrids an' the nixies an' ahl the say craytures widin

hearin' wud be spoortin' to the melojus sounds. Quare, he was!

"But the quarest thing about Lanty was the slight that he putt upon the gyurls. If ye cud iver see the gyurls that there is at Fodry, ye'd understand better, for they're the bate av the world for beauty. Well I know ut! Skins white as milk, cheeks berry-red an' eyes—ah! black or gray, blue or brown, there's the Ould Boy himsilf behind their long lashes, timptation an' aggrvyvation to make ye dizzy an' tears to melt your heart an' fire to burn ut to a cinder an', if ye'd forget ye was a gintleman, a flash av lightning to shrivel ye like a last year's nut.

"But Lanty wud go by thim ahl wid, 'God save ye kindly, me dear!' an' a smile that was over their heads an' at the purple heather beyant; an' they'd luk back an' sigh an' laugh an' frown for the curling goold locks that had so little sinse beneath, an' the dhramin' eyes that saw nothing but the silly purple hills an' the high piled clouds above that had nothing whativer to do wid the case. Quare, he was!

"Now av ahl the tinder an' bewildherin' craytures that wasted good sleep time an' precious daylight hours wid thoughts av the idjut, Grania av Breaghva, who lived in the castle on the big hill wid the O'Briens, was the flower an' the pearl. An orphin, she was, by rayson av the Danes that landed in Kilbaha bay an' got as far as her father's house before Murtagh O'Brien, who was her second cousin on her mother's side, had word av their comin' an' tuk long an' quick steps to discourage future visits. Sivinteen years young an' lovely was Grania; the smile av the sun, she was, an' the breath av the June month; the lights an' the shadows av the say was in her eyes an' the kind word in her purty mouth, so there was not a hairy rapparee in the countryside wud not have murdered his own brother at her nod or choked in a bog to make a steppin' place for her fut. Aven the women spoke well av her—mothers av marriageable daughters cud see no ill in her. As for the lads thim-silves, she'd her pick av a hundher av the best, but a divil a wan wud she pick.

"Well, on a bright mornin' in the springtime, Lanty was lyin' on his elbow by the side av a strame, listenin' to the green rushes that was stoopin' to whisper to the ripplin' wather, an' thinkin' his deep thoughts av nothin' in particular the while, whin a slim shadow fell upon the bank an' he turned his head to Grania, who had come through the woods to gather a posy an' found him there. She smiled at him, an' the gomeril smiled back at her—an' turned his head again to the strame an' forgot her.

"She sat down on the bank behind him an' thought her own thoughts; an' bitther wans they was for a sweet lady. He lukked at the dragon fly that hung like a glint av fire over a ripple—an' the glowing jool av gyurls at his back! The dragon fly darted away an' he lukked at a tiny scrap av a rainbow in the spray av a fall—wid ahl the pink in her cheek an' the say shadows av purple an' green in her misty eyes that he might have been watchin'! Quare, he was!

"'Lanty,' says she, prisintly, 'tell me why ye sit here alone?'

"'Alanna,' he says, 'sure I'm not alone.'

"'But ye wud rather be,' she says.

"'Not when Grania is wid me,' he answers wid politeness, for he was a well spoken lad at his worst.

"'Will ye niver be a man, I wondher,' she says, sighing.

"'What ilse, acushla?' he axes, an' his eyes strayed back to the rainbow 'What do I lack av manhood? Sure I've got me growth.'

"'Poor Lanty!' she says, softly. 'Ye're no bigger than a midget, barring your inches. A man has a sowl, an' ye have but the sivin sinses, an' thim crippled an' twisted. A man must be stirrin', contindin', sufferin'. A man loves men, the touch av their hands, the brith av their bodies an' the sound av their voices, an'—an' he loves a woman.'

"'Why? I wonder,' says Lanty, in the voice av sleep.

"'Hivin grant ye'll find out!' says Grania. 'But life is over aisy for ye an' love treads close in your footsteps, a dog to kick away.'

"She got up from where she sat an'

wint off through the green wood, but Lanty niver knew that she had gone. Only a word she had spoken stuck in his mind an' he reflected on ut in a drowse while the white trout splashed in the pool.

"'A man loves a woman. Why? I wondher.'

"At that, there came a sudden laugh like a peal av bells from the other side av the strame, an' there was somethin' in the sound av ut that brought him bolt upright an' wide awake as quick as the snap av a whip, an' staring, as he had niver stared before, at a colleen in a red cloak.

"Now ye'll mind there shud have been nothing in the sight that was uncommon. Gyurls was a plinty in thim parts, an' as for the red cloak, they was the hoight av style, wid the wool that was carded an' spun in ivery cabin an' the illegant madder dye in the kettles. I'll not say this cloak was redder nor that the eyes an' hair av the colleen was blacker nor her skin whiter than anny other, but lukkin' at her, ut seemed to Lanty that he'd niver seen the like before. There was a gleam to her whiteniss, a sheen to her blackniss an' a flame to her redniss. Her mouth was like the poppy flower an' ut smiled at him wid mockery as she stud, her hair blowin' in witch-strands across her face. Wanst again she laughed an' the pulses drummed in Lanty's temples. Thin she turned, an' wid a back luk over her shouldher, lep up the bank side an' was out av sight in the wood.

"Wan minyut or liss Lanty stud, starin', an' thin, wid a shout, he splashed through the wather an' burst into the wood afther her. Through bush an' bramble, over rock an' fallen timber he wint, like a deer wid the hounds behind. The branches av the hazel lashed his face; the thorns tore at him; ould crass-grained roots stritched in his path to thrip him, but divil a bit he heeded or halted; the brown hare scurried from ut's form as he kem leppin' along, an' the blackcock rose wid a whirr av wings from ut's covert, but he was swifter than ayther, an' so he wint till he kem to the edge av the wood wid the rowlin' slopes av Breaghva before him.

"Where will she be now?" he cries.
 "Well I know she's before me."

"An' wid that, his eyes fell on the black roons av the house av Grania's father; an' there, bright against the dark stone heaps, was a spot av red, an' on the light breeze that was against his sweat-

the boreen tuk him up hill an' down dale, bechune May-sweet hedges an' stone walls, mile upon windin' mile, but niver a fair sight of the colleen did he get, an' whin he kem to Doonbeg, the sun was squatting on the rim av the world an' the twilight lasted but a league longer.

so that he had to curl his weary bones under a hedge for his night's lodging.

"For she'll be av this part," he says to himself. "Sure I'll see her by the mornin'."

"He was up by the dawn, drippin' wid the night dew an' wid an empty belly, cravin' the streaky rasher an' the wheat loaf that ut was accustomed to. But little attention did he pay to anny thrifle like that. He had but the wan thought an' that set his feet in the road again an' kep' thim there till he raiched a bit av a house wid the smoke wreathing from the chimney an' an ould man wid a long beard standin' in the dure.

"God save ye kindly, Father!" says Lanty. "Will ye give me word av a colleen wid a



"God speed ye on, avick, an' may ye come up wid her," says the beggarman.

ing face, there kem the tinkle av a laugh. So off he set again, but behould ye! whin he'd got to the roons, there was nothing there av life but the swallys that nested in the crumbling walls; only at the bend av the boreen that ran northward, there was the moving spot av red again, an' ut was gone as he lukked.

"Northward wint Lanty, hot-fut, an'

red cloak that is hereabouts?"

"The top of the mornin' to ye, avick!" says the ould man. "She's milkin' the cow, an' if ye'll come in to the fire an' wait, ye'll be none the worse for a crust an' a sup, by the luks av ye. An' what wud ye want wid the colleen?"

"Sure, I've not stopped to think," says Lanty.

"'Ye niver do,' says the ould man, as he led him inside.

"'Twud be well for both if ye did, an' save a sight av throuble. But here's the bowl av milk an' the bit av bread,' says he. 'May ut do ye good!'

"'May ye niver want ut,' says Lanty, an' set the bowl to his lips. But as he putt ut down empty, a thought kem to him. 'The milk is warm an' fresh,' says he. 'How is ut that she's yet to the milkin'? Ye tould me that she was milkin' the cow.'

"'Thru for ye,' says the ould man, 'an' she's feedin' the pig an' turnin' the sod an' mendin' the nets an' scrapin' the trenchers an' findin' the time to raise Ould Nick from here to Ballyhinch an' back. Now tell me what's afut in the counthry besides yoursilf, for I've not seen a Christian face for a week.'

"'Twas a particular wan I axed afther,' says Lanty.

"'Sure they're none av thim particular,' the ould man chuckled. "'Tis just conthrary they are, avick, an' that makes ye think so.'

"He cackled like an ould hin as he said ut, an' as ut might have been the echo, there was a laugh outside an' Lanty overturned the stool an' table an' was out in the road again an' runnin'. On before him, wid a good start, was the colleen, her red cloak tossing out behind her in the wind.

"'By the mighty! Ye'll not outstrip me now,' says Lanty, an' he threw himsilf forward wid the rush av a loosed rock down a steep mountainside. 'By the mighty! Ye'll not outstrip me now.' His chist wint out an' his arms cuddled close to his body while the stout legs av him bent an' sthraightened in bounds that carried him a rod or more at aich wan. The hedges slid back from him like a long veil av green on ayther side, an' the broken road was a smooth brown ribbon beneath his flying feet; but run as he might, he niver gained an inch; an' at the crest av the hill beyant Lough Doon he lost her again an' slackened his gait.

"'Dogged does ut,' says Lanty. 'Ahl roads have their ind, praise be! an' if I kape on I'll find her at the ind av this or that.'

"So on he wint, runnin' no longer, but walkin' brisk enough an' wid his eyes sthraight before him, an' whiniver he stopped at the fork av the ways or whiniver he came to a wood, there wud be the glimpse av the red cloak to guide him, an' whin sight failed, there was the wild music av a laugh that drew him on.

"Now as he wint, the sun shone bright above him in the patches av blue bechune the parting clouds, an' the dog rose pinked the hedges an' daisies dotted the striches av green in the fields; there was blossom on the crab trees an' here an' there a brook wint lippety-lap along over the mossy stones. But divil a luk had Lanty for field or flower or sun or runnin' wather, an' his ears was deaf to the whistle av the blackbird an' the chitter av the finch in the branches. Yet he was quick to see the foxy-haired lad, in the white bawneen, that was sittin' by a clare-dhrippin' well at the wayside, an' at the sound av the lad's voice, he stopped and gave him good day.

"'Have ye seen a colleen wid a red cloak passin' by?' Lanty axed him.

"The lad stared an' his big mouth opened. 'Sure 'tis gray her cloak is,' he said, mighty sayrious. 'What will ye be wanting wid her?' he asks.

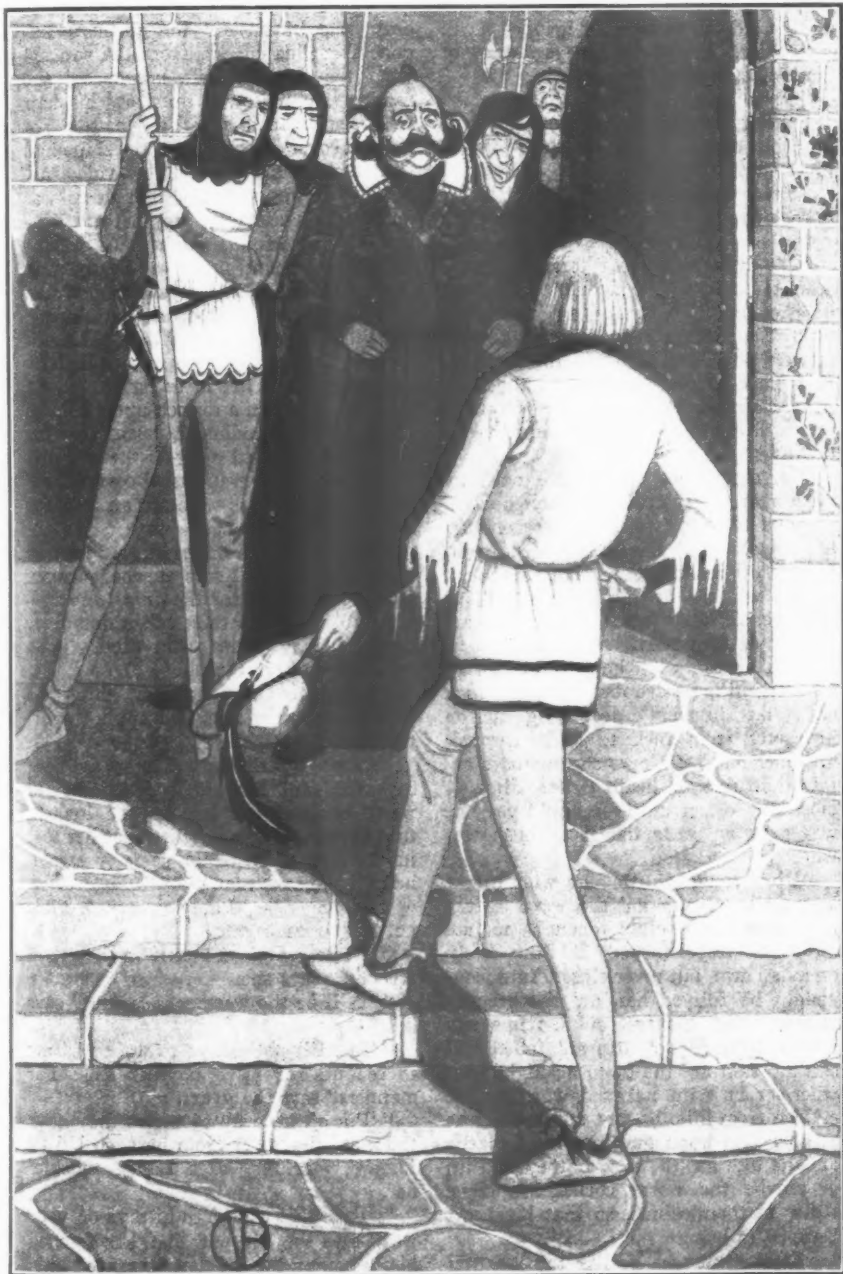
"'I've niver thought,' Lanty made answer. 'But the power in her black eyes draws me afther her like the tug av a coord.'

"'I know,' says the lad. 'Sure I know. She has a clutch for the heartstrings av a man an' whin she pulls, saints be good to us! 'Tis bittier pain an' long lastin'. But her eyes is not black, but gray, gray like the deeps av Doon undher the winter sky.'

"'Tis not the colleen I seek thin,' says Lanty.

"'Well for ye,' says the foxy-haired lad, an' he handles the bill-hook that was by his side an' lets ut fall again. 'I wud have fought ye for her, for ahl the goold thread in your jacket. Plague on that same goold,' says the lad. 'But for that, I might have her.'

"'I grieve for ye,' says Lanty; an' a throe word ut was, for his sowl was full av pity an' likin'. He putt out his hand



A fine big man, he was, wid a noble prothrudin' paunch. "What in the name of Hard-Boiled Brimsthone is all this about?" he roars.

an' the lad tuk ut an' they gripped hard.

"Why? I wondher," says Lanty to himsilf, prisintly. 'Why?'

"Who laughed?" the lad axes.

"Well, I know," says Lanty, an' wid that, he jumped up an' set off again an' niver stopped till Ennis was passed an' the darkness gathered; an' thin, wearied to the marrow, he lay down again undher a hedge an' dhramed av a white face wid strands av hair blowing acress ut an' a scarlet mouth wid a mockin' smile; an' he groaned in his slape an' woke, an' wakin', he thought av the lad he had met an' the likin' he'd tuk for him, an' he seemed to feel the grip av the lad's hand warm about his own, an' Grania's words floated through his mind as he drowsed off.

"A man loves men...the touch av their hands...the brith av their bodies."

"The third day was like the second an' the fourth like the third. Northward danced the red cloak an' northward wint Lanty, wid the fire in his brist an' his eyes iver fixed sthrait before him, an' sometimes he walked, an' sometimes he ran, an' wanst, whin he saw the colleen on a far hill, he dropped behind a rock an' stalked her like a doe. Wriggling on his belly from rock to bush, through mire an' muck an' over sharp stones an' into the furze an' heath tangle, drawing closer an' closer until—beould ye! She was gone an' only the green bush was where she had stud.

"Up through Galway he wint to the lure av her laugh an' the wave av the red, sometimes close enough to see her face back turned an' the beck-on av an arm, but niver closer. Into Con-naught he follyed her, an' the brogues was wore off his feet an' his fine silk clothes tattered an' torn an' faded wid sun an' rain an' the dews av night. An' wheriver he wint he axed word av the colleen from thim he met, an' whoiver he met or kem upon gev him kind spache an' the bite an' the sup, if they had ut, or maybe the warm corner an' clane straw in their cabins, so that his heart warmed to human faces.

"Divil a bit was he like the lad that lay by the sthrame in the wood by Fodry, an' not by rayson of his rags an' tatters

only: the bloom an' the fullness was gone from his cheeks, from the sun an' wind that tanned thim brown an' the famine that hollowed thim, an' his hair was crisped an' blached an' matted for lack av cover an' comb, an' the slape had gone out av his eyes an' his voice, an' his mouth was set firm, though ut was quicker to smile than iver before. Witless, the good folk thought him, but for ahl that he found more wit by the way than he'd lost. There was a beggarman wid his wife an' a troop av bare-legged brats that l'arned him, for the ould leather poke they carried had nut a pinch av the barley meal lift in ut an' the cowl'd rain kem down in a drench upon thim as they shivered undher a bush, yet the ould felly whistled a jig to the childher that his patched wrap-rascal covered, an' he'd a joke for his wife an' an arm for her waist, as ugly as she was.

"God speed ye on, avick, an' may ye come up wid her," says the beggarman. 'Niver hang back for the *droch aimsir*—the bad times, as they call thim. Sure there's no bad times whin there's good company to bear thim.'

"An' there was another thing he learned from a fine, sthrappin' gyurl that he stopped.

"Sorra a hair have I seen av her," says she, an' her small teeth showed white bechune her lips as she lugged, first at him an' thin, modistly, at her toes in the brown dust. 'Is ut your swateheart?' she axes him.

"No, me dear," Lanty answered. 'Tis not me swateheart.'

"I've a red cloak mesilf in the closet at home," says she.

"Ye'll be the warmer in winter," says he.

"But I'll not ask ye to walk wid me to see ut, for ye've nayther sinse nor manners," says the gyurl.

"I'm on me way to where they have thim, an' that's far from here, so I'll be joggin', machree," says Lanty, mockin' her.

"Take this wid ye to hilp ye on your way," says she, an' wid that, she fetched him a box on the ear that staggered him, an' was off like a flash av light.

"Twas long afther that before he



saw the red glimmer agin, an' thin it was on the far side av a bog, an' waist deep an' strugglin' in ut he was more than the wanst before he got through, an' thin the *pishogue*, if ye'll cah! ut so, drew him on through a desolate counthry into Tyrone, an' ut was in Tyrone that a new thrial was putt on him.

"In the airy part av the evening ut was, that from the top av wan hill he lukked to the top av another, an' there was perched a tremenjus big dun—which ye'll mind is a gintleman's residince—wid a high fince about ut an' big gates. An' something that was red was at the gates an' something that was white beckoned him an' thin passed through.

"So down the hill went Lanty an' up the hill he climbed, an' as he kem closer to the dun, there was the sound av music

an' the voices av men loud in laughter an' in song. Not a sound that Lanty wud turn his back on now, but at the gates there was a porther man that barred his way.

"'I'm afther seekin' a colleen in a red cloak that passed through here,' says Lanty.

"'Are ye so?' says the porther man. 'Are ye sure now she passed through?'

"'I am that,' says Lanty.

"'Thin wait till she comes out,' says the porther man, an' pushed him back none too aisy.

"'Now at the push, a new sort av a faylin' came



over Lanty. 'Twas the rale O'Brien faylin', but he'd niver had ut before. 'Is rags

distasteful to ye?' says he. 'Thin ye shall have thim.' An' wid that, he caught the porther by the neck an' wid wan jerk he ripped his coat from top to botthom.

'Rags, ye bla'guard!' says he, an' tore a rint in the yalla livery vest. 'Rags!' Off kem a sleeve an' the back av the coat hung in sthrrips, an' in another minyut, the man lay on the ground makin' quare noises an' widout a garmint fit to hang on a scarecrow. An' Lanty was sthridin' up the path to the dure av the dun.

"But there was another check for him, for two husky lads wid spears barred the way an', whin he putt thim aside—which he did in good O'Brien style—a dozen more wint for him, an' there was the beginnings av a lively althercation, as ye might say, whin the music stopped an' the Masther av the Dun came to the fore, a crowd av guests behind him.

"A fine big man he was, wid a noble prothrudin' paunch an' a mustache that was twisted an' tied at the inds at the back av his neck, for to kape ut out av the soup he'd been atin'. He'd a crimson face an' a purple an' crimson nose an' he wore grand clothes an' his frown was angry.

"What in the name av Hard-Boiled Brimsthone is all this about?' he roars.

"'Tis the civil welkin that your attintive attendants is givin' to an humble sthranger,' says Lanty, as the handy lads fell back. 'Sure 'tis a grand opin house ye kape here in Tyrone,' says he. 'The blessing av the wayfarer be on ye!'

"What's he afther?' says the Masther av the Dun to the spearmen. 'Who is he?'

"Some rapscaillon from the south,' says wan av the men. 'Teague here has an arm bruk an' I'm thinkin' Martin's ribs is smashed entirely. The omadhaun was axin' afther a colleen wid a red cloak.'

"At that, there was a woman's laugh from widin the hall, but no wan heard ut but Lanty.

"Take him away an' hang him,' says the Masther.

"I'll throuble ye to listhen a momint,' says Lanty, wid an O'Brien light in his eyes an' a crooked O'Brien smile. 'I'm ahl for harmony an' plisint relations but I've business widin, an' if anny bog-throttin' bodach av ye ahl bars me way—'

"Hang him!' says the Masther.

"They made a rush, but Lanty stepped

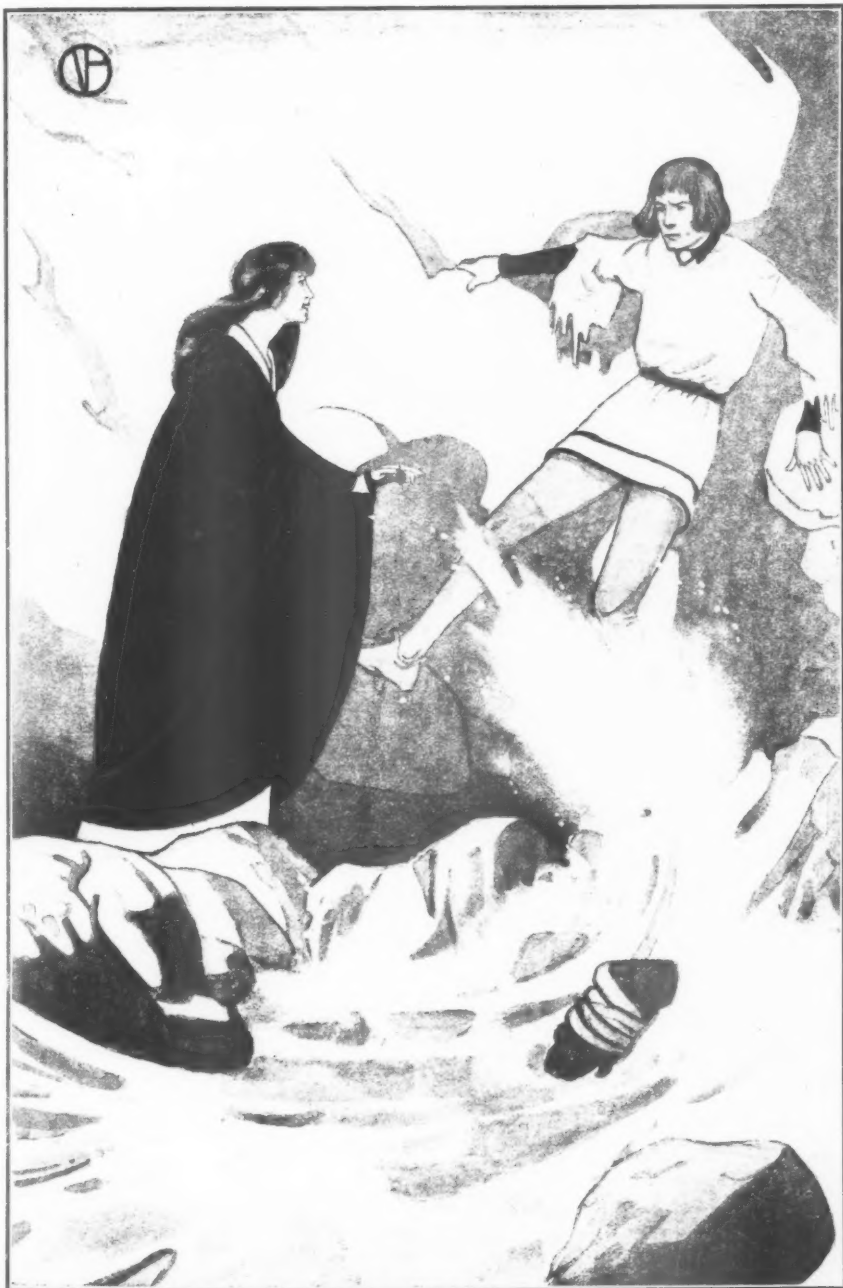
back an' caught up the iron bar av the big dure, that was standin' on ind in a corner. By the middle he held ut an' give ut a whirl an' the Masther dhrropped. He shouted so that the rafter rang to his cry, an' swung the bar, an' the foremost wint down before him like barley stalks against the cradle blade, an' thim behind dhrrew back into the big hall. Afther thim wint Lanty, whoopin' wid joy, an' there they had ut hot an' sthrong an' a plinty for as long as the dhrinkin' av a couple av quarts. Stools an' spears an' dishes flew, an' tables was turned over; there was cursin' an' yelpin' an' the clatter av steel an' the smash av splintherin' wood, an' thin, a rush av feet here an' yon, an' silence. An' Lanty stud alone in the hall, save for thim that lay around in the wrack, the blood tricklin' through his hair over his face an' from his neck, panting like a spent hound an' happy as a blessed sowl in Paradise.

"But he was av no mind to loither. Ut was his thought that he wud investigate the chambers av the house an' he had moved a step forward whin the shutters av a windy creaked on rusty hinges an' there, lukkin' in at him, was the face he sought—there a momint, an' thin, gone.

"Out av the windy he wint an' 'twas well for him that he did, for Bloody Death waited him at the dure, impty handed as he was. Aven as he ran in the way that the red cloak showed, there was a shoutin', an' an arrow stuck in his thigh before he gained the dark wood. In an hour, he was limping, but while he cud limp, he held to the slot, though at the latter ind he sang an' laughed an' talked foolishhniss to himself in a loud voice. Then he knew nothing until he woke undher a low roof av thatch an' found an ould woman chewin' yarbs an' plas-therin' thim on his leg.

"Where am I?' says Lanty.

"Glory be! ye've come to your sinses,' says the ould lady, tyin' the rag she had over the poultice. 'As for where ye are, ye're where ye'll stay, for ye've been crool hurted, so ye have, bad luck to the rapparrees that done ut! Aisy now, little son! Now lie ye still whiles I bring ye the broth, an' to-morry, we'll talk, so



"And now at the last ye have me, Love Lanty. What will ye do with me?"

we will. Ee-yah!" says she, as she wint to the pot, 'to think av a lad like you doing ut!"

"There's an ind to every road," said Lanty, at the beginning, an' the road that he wint an' the story that he lift behind him both inded whin on a day he came to a place where the black cliffs laved their feet in blue wather an' the gulis screamed overhead. Malin Head, some says ut was, some that it was Bloody Foreland. Anyway, 'twas at the meetin' av land an' say, an' the long chase was done.

"He'd lift the cottage where the ould woman had nursed him, whole an' sthrong as iver, but the fever was still in him that the yarbs she brewed nor the words av power that she spoke cud not drive out nor cure, an' so he'd tuk the road again—the road that inded at the say. An' now the colleen in the red cloak was before him on a neck av turf not longer than ye cud heave half a brick. On three sides av her was the Atlantic, an' behind her was Lanty. She stopped an' seemed to luk before her an' Lanty stopped an' lugged at her.

"Thin she turned.

"Wid a throbbin' heart the lad waited, an' slowly she walked towards him, the wind whipping the cloak close to her body an' blowing the hair across her face as he'd seen ut on the morning that she first kem to him. An' he saw that the beauty av her faytures was beyant annything he cud have thought, an' there was illegance in her form an' grace an' lightness in her step. Smiling she was, an' her mouth was red as her cloak. Yet he stud there stock still. An' she kem closer an' closer an' stopped before him an' spoke, an' her voice seemed like bells far away.

"So at the last ye have me, Love Lanty. Long have ye follyed me, surely an' truly. Mountains have not turned ye back; rivers in flood have not stopped ye nor stayed ye; hunger an' thirst have ye suffered an' the tormint av longing that's the harder to bear; ye ran upon the bright steel that barred your way to me

an' the blood av ye dripped for me sake. An' now at the last ye have me, Love Lanty. What will ye do wid me?"

"An' Lanty stud stock still an' stared.

"Have ye no word to say to me?" she axed.

"But no word said Lanty.

"She putt out her hands an' tuk the both av his, an' the touch av her flesh was cowlid like sleet an' the chill wint up Lanty's arms an' settled in his heart, an' ahl the time she smiled. She dropped his hands an' he was frowning.

"An' still he stud an' his frown grew deeper, but he said nothing.

"Now ye have me," she said. 'If I ran from ye, wud ye follow me?"

"Thry ut," says Lanty, sthru gglin' wid a thick tongue.

"Wid a dart like a swally, she was past him. Down the neck av land she sped, across the down an' sthright aistward, an' Lanty watched her until the red cloak glimmered to a mere spark an' wint out as the tinkle av a laugh raiched his ears.

"Thin he got up, drew a deep brith an' walked off at a brisk gait—due west."

"What did he go west for?" asked the young man in the black calico shirt, when Mr. Mulready made it evident that he had finished.

The Nestor of the MacGonigal Flats cupped his hands to shelter the flame of the match he had lit, and sucked his tobacco into a glow. "Not for to grow up wid the counthry," he replied. "He wint south for that, an' 'tis ginirally belaved that his eldest daughter was named Grania afther her mother, but from me knowledge av the ways av me sex, 'tis me belafe that if the colleen had gone west, he'd have gone aist, an' if she'd had him cornered, he'd have jumped into the say."

"He was one bonehead, that guy," mused the young man in the black calico shirt.

"He was a big fool intirely," agreed Mr. Mulready, "but 'tis through foolishness we ahl pass to sinse an' rayson."

The Girl With a Note Like Melba's

A NEW STORY OF THE
"YOUNGER SET" IN PEMBINA

By WALTER JONES

Illustrated by William Van Dresser

"O H, Lenore, then you're *positively* going to New York to study?"

"Who under, Lenore?"

"I suppose, in a couple of years, when you're a grand opera star, you'll never remember there *is* such a place as Pembina."

"To New York! And Papa wont even let me run up to Middleburg for violin lessons! Lenore Hopkinson, your father lets you do *everything*!"

"But you simply can't go this week, dear. There's Evie's bridge luncheon and the Bachelors' dance Thursday."

The blond-haired young girl at the piano in Mrs. Vining's softly lighted music-room ran an impudent scale and gave a gay little trill—ending in the note her teacher had called the note like Melba's; then she turned her smiling face upon the eager group of her friends.

"Yes," she admitted, "it's settled; and I sha'n't even stay for the dance. I'm leaving in the morning with Miss Frye. She's going to present me personally to Señor Lamperti. She says she's taught me all she knows, and— It'd be perfectly dreadful, wouldn't it, if it turned out I didn't have the voice! I'd be too ashamed to come back. But if—" She paused and with closed lids lapsed a moment into a dream world of vaguely imagined triumphs. "Well you can just *believe* I'll never forget Pembina anyway!"

"Miss Frye's been at our house all afternoon and it's only since supper Papa gave in. I ran right up here to tell Mrs. Vining; and she insisted on 'phoning you all, so we could have my last night

together. But I *must* go home now and finish packing."

A protesting chorus arose.

"Just one more song."

"It's only eleven."

"Your last night, Lenore!"

"Wont you be scared to death alone in New York?"

"Girls, she'll see the latest shrieks in style. We'll make her do all our shopping."

"You'll come home over next summer, wont you?"

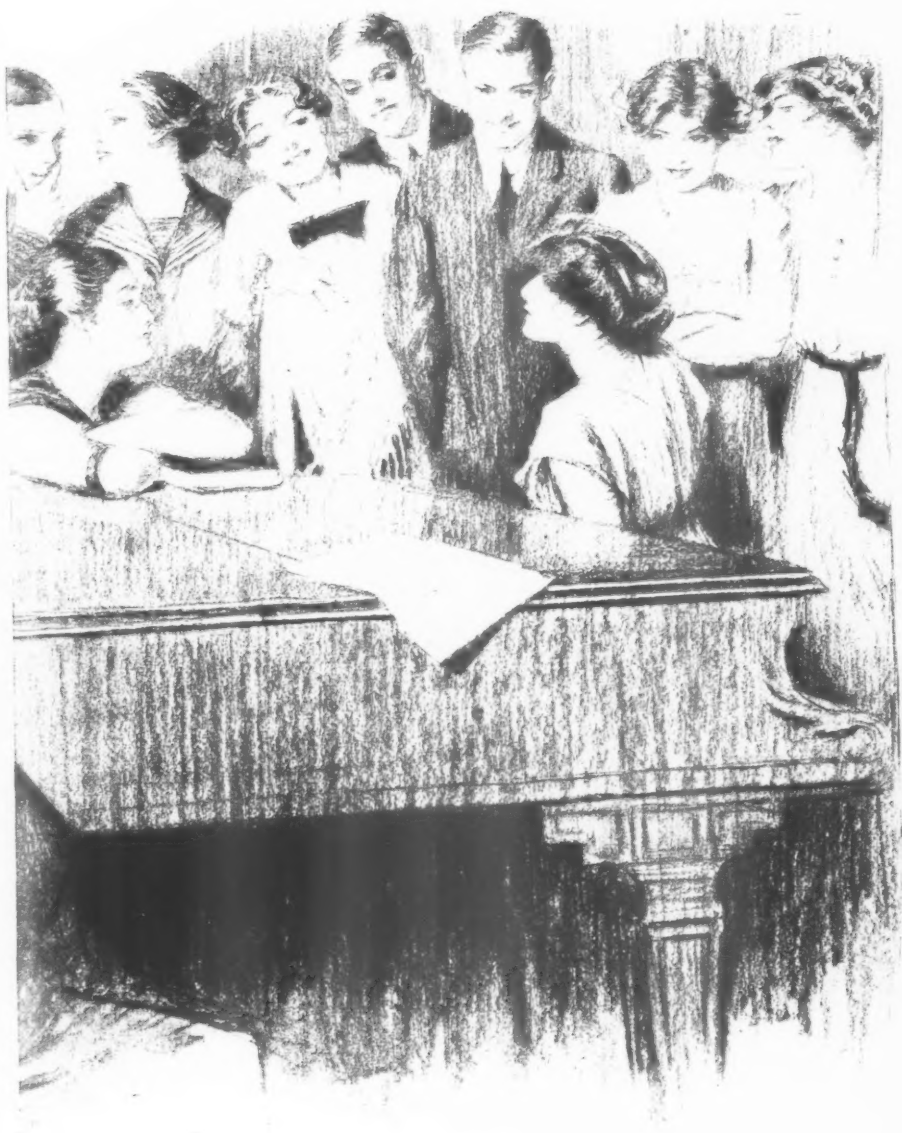
"Not a lullaby, Lenore. Sing us one of those skyrockety things with the high notes."

As the girl turned back to her music, Mrs. Vining, standing a little apart, studied the group about the piano with eyes that were reminiscently tender and a trifle sad: the boys, with their fresh faces and determinedly correct clothes; the girls, flowering into innocent fashions and coquetries—how world-eager, how care-free, how self-impressed they all seemed. Only yesterday, they were children and she one of "the younger set." She remembered Lenore playing dolls; and now it was Miss Hopkinson, going forth to become a famous coloratura soprano.

She herself, in intervals when the sway of her little social kingdom irked her, had run away to other climes and listened to opera in Paris, and Buenos Ayres, and Milan; and her mouth straightened into a very grim smile over Miss Frye's metropolitan predictions for her pupil. How many felt themselves called—and how few were chosen! Still,



The girl at the piano turned to the eager group of her friends: "Yes."



she admitted, "it's settled; and I sha'n't even stay for the dance."

every bird must try its wings. And if there were a thousandth chance—

But how much better if Lenore could have been content to remain at home, just a sweet, small-town girl, and coddle her father's declining years, and marry Stephen Grant, and—

Involuntarily her glance sought Stephen, gazing with hungry and not very happy eyes, at Lenore; and she guessed that it would take quite all of his square-jawed young courage to face their separation. Acting upon a sudden impulse, she crossed over to him, rested her hand lightly on his shoulder and said very quietly, "Stephen, I wonder if you haven't been thinking the same thing I have: that Lenore isn't our Lenore to-night. She hears a bigger world than ours calling her and she thinks she wants to answer; but I'm sure she doesn't, really. You mustn't let her, Stephen. You mustn't let New York take her away from us."

"I'm afraid, Mrs. V., there's nothing I can say to keep her."

In his voice was a hurt that went straight to her heart; but, before she could reply, the song ended and, with a friendly little pressure of her fingers, she left him to say good-night to her guests.

Lenore and Stephen were the last to leave the big house on the hill. In silent constraint they walked down the neatly trimmed terraces, opalescent under a September moon. As they swung into the deserted, maple-shaded street, the girl turned to him almost angrily: "Stephen Grant, I think you're just horrid! You haven't said one word this whole evening—that you're glad I'm going to New York or anything."

"But I *am* glad, Len," he tried to answer heartily, "if you're sure it's what you want to do. Only it kind of floored me, coming out like that. I was a little disappointed you hadn't told me before the others."

"I meant to; you know I did. But it was all decided so suddenly, and I ran up to tell Mrs. V., and she insisted—Well, you see how it was."

"I know you meant to tell me. It's all right. I guess I'm always a grouch when I think of losing you, dear."

He put out his arm to help her across a curb and would have closed his fingers over hers, but she eluded him. There was a note of reservation in his apology that displeased her. "You've been a perfect bear to-night! What'll the crowd think? That we've quarreled. You know how I hate anything like that; or else that you haven't any—Stephen, I don't believe you *have* any faith in me; I don't believe you *want* me to succeed."

"Of course I do, Len'. Only I don't like to think of you alone there in New York. If you should get sick, or anything should happen to your voice—"

"But there wont anything happen to my voice; there *daren't*. And we've been over all this a hundred times! How can I ever have a career, if I'm not willing to sacrifice for it? I'm prepared for that from all those dreadful, discouraging articles the singers write in the magazines. You *said* you were willing to wait for me; but if you don't want to, you just needn't."

They had reached the Hopkinson home. At the gate Lenore paused, and stripped off the ring that sparkled on her engagement finger—next to Mrs. Vining's, the most gorgeous diamond that had ever been bought in Pembina—and held it out to Stephen Grant. "Stephen, I'm going to give this back to you. I haven't any right to hold you. Two years is a long time. You know I'm not returning to Pembina next summer. Papa is to visit me at Christmas, and in June I shall go to Aunt Clemie's in New Jersey. I shall be too busy for good times; but if anyone else came along that *you* cared for more—"

She had begun calmly enough, like a child reciting a well conned speech; but under the silent, tense reproach of his big presence she could proceed no farther.

"Why, Len'," he stammered, "what kind of a joke is this? Put that ring back on your finger." His smile was ghastly, even in the moonlight.

But Lenore did not put back the ring. "It isn't a joke, and has nothing to do with our—misunderstanding to-night. It's just that I think it fairer to leave

you free. If we're going to be true to each other, we will be anyway; and if we're not, the ring won't help us. Now Stephen,"—it was the tone that always persuaded him against his will.—"don't spoil the evening any longer. Be sensible and take it and come in and help me strap up my trunk."

At last he reached out for the ring. His fingers, closing over it, scarcely touched hers; then, instead of following her through the gate, he turned on his heel and walked off. "Why, Stephen," she called after him, in alarm, "you haven't said good-by to me; you—" She could dimly see his squared, set shoulders turning into Maple Street. Her voice tightened to a pleading whisper: "Please, Stephen!" She stood waiting, till his footsteps grew fainter and died away; then she gave a defiant little laugh that strangled into a sob and ran up the steps into the house.

II

"Lenore!"

"Blanche Vining! You haven't changed a bit. You're positively looking younger."

The two friends met in a swift embrace; then Mrs. Vining held off for inspection the very elegantly tailored, self-possessed young person who stood before her. "My, but you're chic! When did you get in? We weren't expecting you until next week."

"I know. I was to go to Aunt Clemie's for a while; but she took a sudden start for Europe and wanted to shut up her house. So I came on through and slipped down on the local last night to surprise Papa. But it wasn't much of a surprise. He was out to the hotel for supper. And how musty our house smells! Let's go right up to your music-room, dear. I know it's going to be the only *tolerable* place in this town to me now."

When they had settled themselves in low rockers, she went on: "I telephoned up here, and when the maid said you were out, I went over and spent the evening gossiping with Edie. She's growing terribly stout—really, she ought to take better care of herself—but she's just as jolly as ever."

"Who else have you seen?"

"Only one or two, on the way up here this morning."

The girl drew her long chamois gloves through her fingers caressingly, then turned to her friend with staccato impatience: "Blanche Vining, I don't see how you stand it to stay here! The buildings downtown look just like a lot of little soap-boxes, and Main Street's as dead as a graveyard."

"Does Pembina strike you like that?" Mrs. Vining's tone was a shade regretful. "I've never noticed, I suppose, because it's home. Anyway, I can remember several times—when I had the fever in Egypt or that week in quarantine off Montevideo—when I'd have given a good deal to be back here."

"Well," shrugged Lenore dutifully. "I hope it'll wear off. I'll pray it will—if I've got to stay here. But you haven't told me the news; what's happened in our village these winters?"

"Nothing much. Les' Cotton and Lucille Shayne have made it up again; and Romney Porter didn't marry the sporty widow from Sioux Falls; they're building a new golf course at the Country Club; and—"

"Have the club dances been lively?"

"For some people."—Mrs. Vining tried to speak lightly,—"but I fancy Stephen Grant's thought them lonely enough."

"I guess not," Lenore cut in quickly. "At least he's never found time to write me very often."

"But I thought"—with surprised brows—"that he went on to—that you saw him in New York."

"I did, though he came at a dreadfully unfortunate time, when I had a week-end on with some people who were opening up their house on the Hudson. So I could only have lunch with him."

Lenore got up and drifted restlessly about the room. "This splendid picture of Melba! I envy your having it more now that I've heard her. She sings with such *Art*. Isn't it ridiculous, Frye's saying I have a note like hers—though of course my range does extend one note higher!"

"Oh, Mrs. V., I've met the splendidest musical people: that gorgeous Spaniard

that sang *Rhadames* the time I took you to 'Aida;' and Paul Conti, at a supper-party; and Illma Saville. We're quite chummy. She's been a pupil of Lamperti's. Signed up for one of Savage's companies, and has a contract to tour West with that big Italian band, which she says she'll turn over to me if the management is willing. But I think she makes a mistake, accepting an engagement in English. I prefer to camp around New York for an opening. Between ourselves, Lamperti has negotiations under way with the Boston opera, though I don't suppose—with a deprecatory shrug—"anything will come of it."

"Isn't that splendid!" Mrs. Vining put an arm around Lenore's waist and drew her to the piano. "But you haven't sung anything for me yet. Will you, dear?"

"Certainly. But I sha'n't be in very good voice after that tiresome railroad trip."

She sat down to the piano, a svelte, trim, consciously poised figure, sure of herself and her accompaniments. Two of the florid songs she sang were in French, and when she had finished with "Caro Nome," she turned from the music bench with a dazzling smile that seemed to take agreement for granted.

"Wait till Frye hears that! Not much like the sentimental rubbish I used to sing. Don't you think Lamperti's done wonders for me? My upper register was thin in spots; and he's placed my voice farther forward, too."

"You sing quite in the grand manner, Lenore."—Mrs. Vining's answering smile was inscrutable. "You'll electrify the town. I suppose Sunday night you'll appear in the Presbyterian choir and everybody in the county'll flock to hear you. And Addie Cline'll ask you to get up one of those 'sister artiste' concerts with her."

Lenore smiled indulgently. "Poor Addie. Is she still singing 'The Rosary'? No. I don't want to sing in any choir. I don't want *everybody* flocking to hear me."

"Well, then, how would a musicale here do for a welcome home? I've been thinking I'd have to give something

pretty soon anyway to discharge my out-of-town indebtedness."

"Oh, Mrs. V., that would be splendid!" Lenore gasped delightedly. "But you mustn't, really—for me."

"Just the local Club crowd,"—her hostess went on planning—"and the younger married set from Middleburg and Sharonville. And for a performer, beside yourself, how would you like a violinist? I'm sure Hilda Thorne-Jacobs would come down—I've subscribed quite liberally to the Conservatory."

"Thorne-Jacobs! Why, she's given Chicago concerts and the critics call her another Maud Powell. That would be really distinguished, Blanche."

"And if de Gorma is in Toledo, I think I could persuade him to lend *clat* to the accompaniments."

"You don't mean Edouard de Gorma?" Miss Hopkinson caught her breath, with rapturous excitement.

Mrs. Vining nodded.

"The one that plays all the concert accompaniments for the opera stars! Why, Blanche, I'd be almost frightened to appear with him! But, my dear, I wouldn't let you—all this will be horribly expensive."

"No,"—Mrs. Vining's jeweled fingers graciously waved the objection aside.—"I may make some arrangement with Jacobs; but Eddie de Gorma'd come for love."

"Why, I didn't dream you knew him—personally!"

"Oh, we've crossed once or twice together; and I'd met him before that—in my finishing-school days. Then you like the idea, Lenore?"

"Like it? Why, with those stars, it'll be the swellest affair ever given in the county! And it may do a lot professionally to get me noticed."

"Well, then, I'll get a date from de Gorma, rush my order to the engravers for the cards, and have you and Edie help me with the invitation lists."

"Let me see," pondered Lenore, puckering her brows—"what'll I sing? Something like this, Mrs. V.: first a group of light French chansons; then a heavy piece to show I've got temperament—they're always saying lyric so-

pranos never have any temperament; and for my grand finale, something big—'Charmant Viseau,' or maybe the 'Bell Song' from 'Lakmé'—that'll prove I'm not just a parlor cantatrice. How does that sound to you?"

"Quite ambitious enough, especially the aria; but you know best about your numbers."

"And I'll have the loveliest Paris dress to wear, one of those new Russian effects. It was a model gown and I bought it scandalously cheap just off the Avenue." She put her arms impulsively around the older woman and hugged her. "Mrs. V., why are you always doing such nice things for people!"

Mrs. Vining rejected the compliment judiciously. "I shouldn't call it particularly nice, discharging one's outlawed indebtedness." She kissed Lenore affectionately. "Remember, dear, this room is yours any time you want for practice. Now run along and get acquainted with the crowd again—for weeks they've been talking about nothing but your coming; and I'll scribble off a note to de Gorma."

III

It was a small dinner Mrs. Vining gave to precede the musicale: only the two visiting musicians, Lenore and Romney Porter—the choice of a *vis-à-vis* was Miss Hopkinson's—and for herself Colonel Charteris, cosmopolite, of Middleburg. She limited her number to avoid jealousies and seated her guests at a round table so that conversation might be general.

Lenore was resplendent in her Russian gown, in soft merging shades of green, with satin slippers, and in her hair a star of brilliants, quite after the traditional fashion of divas. She ate only her salad and a slice of bread, and drank a glass of light wine.

The first awe she had felt in de Gorma's presence had worn away during her afternoon's rehearsal; and to-night, at Mrs. Vining's table, she was free to find him the most fascinating man she had ever met. He accompanied, drew out, controlled the conversation quite as she imagined he must his singers, and with a complete self-effacement. It was

in response to the magic of his suggestion that Hilda Thorne-Jacobs told them gay anecdotes of her student days in a Berlin pension, that Colonel Charteris related his adventures in the South African veldts, that Mrs. Vining recounted the splendors of the opera in Buenos Ayres.

But delightful as these reminiscences were, Lenore longed to have de Gorma to herself. She felt that he would understand, appreciate her, as no one ever had. And she was confident that, without violating the ethics that proscribed "shop" from the language of hospitality, she could secure some sort of prophecy upon her future. But in the bright impersonality of the table-talk there was no opportunity for tête-à-tête conversation; and the moment came all too soon when the gentlemen were left to their cigars and liqueurs.

Almost immediately Edie arrived for a last personal touch to the rooms—although the flowers were in the hands of a city florist, and a Middleburg caterer was serving the collation. Soon began the slamming of automobile doors and the buzz of conversation below. But Lenore did not issue from Mrs. Vining's boudoir until it was almost the hour for the program—just time for a swift, meteoric passage through the rooms.

There was one figure she sought and found, a little apart from the others, silent in a certain proud dignity of disappointment. She went straight up to Stephen Grant and held out her hand. "Stephen, you're the biggest stranger in town!"

"I know, Len'. I—" He blushed and stammered, conscious of a hundred interested eyes, incapable of any facile fib to cover the situation. "You had such a crowd of callers Sunday night, and you're always up here at Mrs. Vining's, and I thought after the way—things turned out in New York—that you didn't care—"

"Silly! Don't you understand everyone has engagements that can't be broken? And I *always* care to see my friends. We've had the loveliest little dinner here to-night and I might have asked you; but how could I, when you never come around?" And, smiling, she

passed on toward a group of Middleburg admirers.

Even before Lenore sang, the chic of her costume, the dash of her manner, had won her audience. She had caught the New York idea: nothing succeeds like the appearance of success.

Thorne-Jacobs and de Gorma kept graciously in the background—it was Miss Hopkinson's night. The program was short and there were no encores. At ten-thirty it was all over and she stood surrounded by the ecstatic praises of her friends.

"Melba never sang that aria better!"

"Your gown is ravishing, my dear—Paris, I presume?"

"Why, child, it seems only a year or so ago I was trotting you on my knee, and now you're going to make Pembina famous."

"Didn't de Gorma play the 'Liebesträum' exquisitely?"

And, "What do you think?" Edie whispered. "There's a big music critic here—a friend of de Gorma's—that thin man by the mantelpiece. You'll get the grandest notices. Lenore! Mrs. V. wouldn't let me tell you before for fear it would make you nervous."

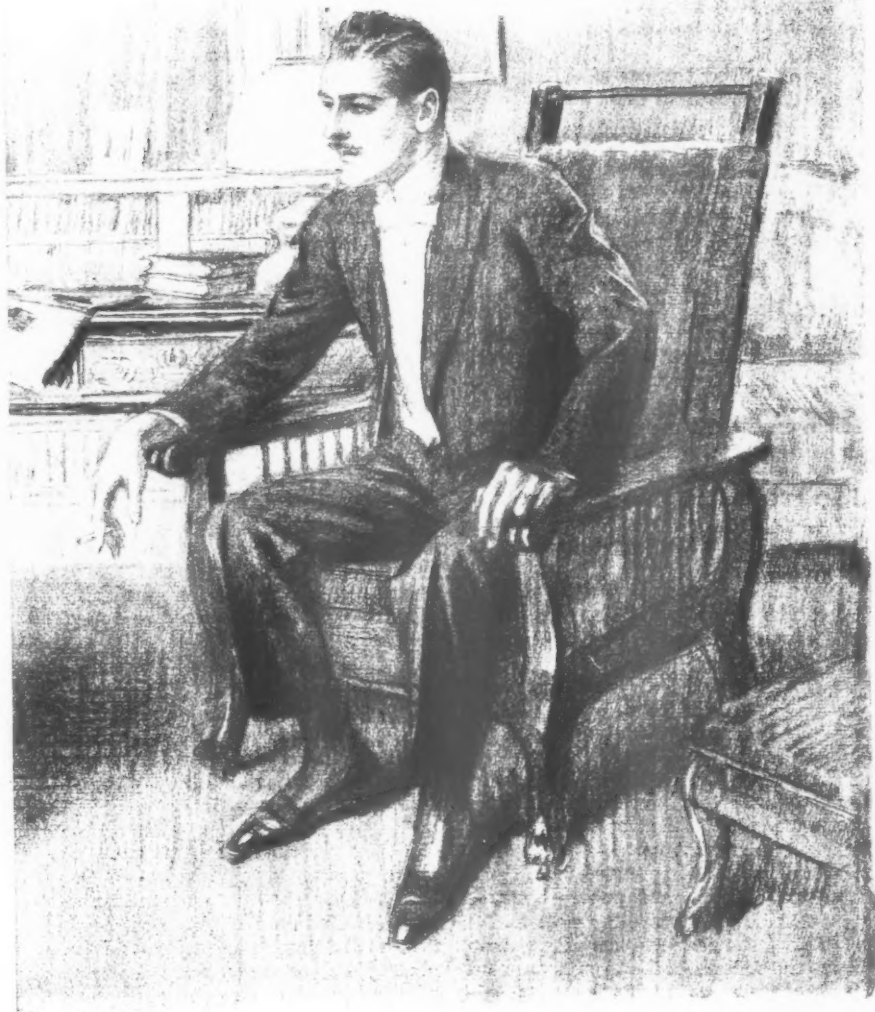


His cigarette had burnt out, but he still held it, unnoticed, between his
you my

Lenore turned back to gather up some music from the piano—and found de Gorma standing by her side.

"Even divas must eat," he said. "May I pilot you to the supper room?"

"Certainly." She gave a quick flush of pleasure at the distinction of his atten-



fingers. He seemed to be expecting her to speak, but, as she did not, he went on. "Let me tell own story."

tion; then she hesitated—and dared:
"But I'm not very hungry—"

"Shall I forage an ice and trust you
to find a quiet place where—"

"Mrs. Vining's library!" she cried delightedly, "The very spot for a chat."

There was a showy little fire on the

hearth and they drew up cosily before it. With Lenore's permission, de Gorma lighted a cigarette. There ensued a silent interval more intimate than any conventional preliminaries; then he said, turning to her candidly: "I am sure you are to be congratulated upon this evening's

success. One's friends are perhaps one's most satisfactory critics and you are fortunate in finding your native town so agreeable a musical community to reside in."

Lenore glowed under his commendation; but, "I am not expecting to reside here," she hastened to explain.

"No?" he queried. Then, after a pause: "You are thinking of—a church position—or concert work?"

"Only if"—she dared not hint a verdict more directly—"my limitations compel me."

"It isn't a question of limitations, I fancy," he replied. "That would scarcely be a compliment to our hostess' musical discernment. But if it is opera you are looking toward, I am sorry."

"Why?" she asked uneasily.

He pondered a moment. "The life of an artist, it demands so many sacrifices."

"I realize that," she countered, "and I am prepared to make them. I expect to scrimp, and deny myself pleasures, and work hard, and get myself up in Spanish and Italian—"

"But that is scarcely what I meant," he explained gravely. "There are other sacrifices, less material, that nevertheless scar away a part of oneself."

She understood only that the chord he struck was deeper than any note of casual advice, and waited fearfully for him to go on.

"A singer's life is lonely. The years of her study are one long separation from home and family. And afterwards, even if she is successful, her days are still an isolated round of practice, and jealousies, and hotels, and travel—a condition that does not make for close ties.

"And meanwhile she has grown away from the friends of her youth, perhaps from one very particular friend, who—It's my rather old-fashioned notion, Miss Hopkinson, that the primal destiny of us all is marriage. And not many opera singers fulfill that destiny successfully."

"But I"—Lenore's voice was very low—"shouldn't be separating myself from any—very particular friend,"—there was an unconsciously guilty accent on the adverb—"and opera singers *do* marry happily. Louise Homer—"

"Ah, yes, but we have few Homers! And when artists marry, as they frequently do, outside their profession, that does not make for compatibility. It is terribly trite, but I am afraid it is also terribly true that Art demands an undivided allegiance."

His cigarette had burnt out, but he still held it, unnoticed, between his fingers. He seemed to be expecting her to speak; but, as she did not, he went on, his voice thrilling with a sense of intimacies seldom vouchsafed.

"Let me tell you my own story. As a boy I dreamed, like many another, of becoming some day a world-famous virtuoso. I learned all I thought I could of the piano at home and then, against the wishes and finances of my family, went abroad to study. I stayed three years. When I returned, I was no longer Ed-die Gorman of Salt Lake City, Utah, but Edouard de Gorma of Berlin and Vienna—and Salt Lake, in small pica. I gave two concerts in New York and one in Boston and received good notices. I even secured a manager and made a short tour. But the woods were full of pianists—and I hadn't the divine spark! So I soon sank to the level where I belonged: a satisfactory—if you will, a successful—accompanist.

"And meanwhile the very particular friend, who was to have waited, had grown impatient of my brief letters, and postponed visits, and delayed triumphs, and had become another's.

"So you see"—with a gesture of unspeakable weariness, he threw his cigarette into the spent embers—"I have been a failure both as a musician and a man. Half of my life I've spent bowing in the background of some diva's applause; and as for a home, I have no wife, no children, not even a kitten that cares—only a dreary succession of Pullmans and apartments."

Lenore still sat with bowed head. Her eyes were fixed on her little green slippers; but she was seeing Stephen Grant's white, smitten face, as she had seen it a thousand times since the night when she gave him back his ring.

"But if I shouldn't go on," she asked in a very small voice, "what about my work? What's been the use of it all?"

"The greatest use in the world, dear lady!" With a transformation that was magical he brought himself from the bitterness of his own past to the brightness of his companion's future. "I can't conceive any higher destiny than employing one's talents for the benefit of one's family, and friends, and one's city. A splendid voice is just as much of an inspiration in a lullaby or an anthem as in an aria. And there's the cultural side, of clubs and concerts; so many are eager to listen, so few capable to perform. I should give a great deal to-night if *my* music were a part of a very full life instead of the whole of a very empty one."

He reached out and for a few moments laid his long, slender, sensitive fingers over hers. "Perhaps I shouldn't have spoken," he said huskily; "it hasn't been easy. All this has been locked up in my heart for a long time. I can't live my own life over again, and so maybe I've been waiting for some one to whom I could trust the possible benefit of my mistakes. If you still are quite *sure*, if you still hear only the bravos, I shall be very sorry to have turned a gala evening into a dismal one; but if you hear other voices, of the ties that are never mended, of the friendships that may not wait, I shall be very glad."

She looked up at him at last, with a wan smile, resolute against her tears. "I'm afraid you *have* made my evening a very dismal one indeed. But you need not be sorry."

The last belated guest had gone and in the deserted salon Mrs. Vining was alone with de Gorma.

"Tell me," she asked quietly, "did you persuade her?"

He bent his head in somber assent. "She's giving it up, her dream of opera,—for Pembina and the man she loves."

"*Dieu merci!*" she murmured. And, seeing his drawn face: "Was it a struggle?"

"Yes," he answered wearily.

She waited a little, as if for some fuller revelation; and then: "It was very good of you to come," she thanked him. "Lenore is a fine, sweet girl, and you have done her a great service."

"The service has been yours, dear friend."

"Well, then, together," she conceded, "we've saved her from herself. I couldn't sit by and see her go on neglecting her father and breaking the spirit of the de-centest boy in town—and all in the name of Art! Besides,"—she smiled faintly—"there are already quite enough 'Rhine maidens' and 'Unseen voices' in opera."

"Was that her—very particular friend, that big, square-set boy you pointed out to me?"

She nodded.

"They'll be very happy."

"Yes," she mused, "I can see the good years stretching out ahead of them. It will always be a proud memory of Lenore's that she *could* have been a great coloratura. And poor, dear, earnest Stephen will never recover from the marvel of her giving it all up for him."

"It's something, isn't it," he slipped in, "to have saved them their illusions?"

"And she'll be president of the Music Club, and give a charity concert every year in the Opera House; they'll name their first daughter after Melba, and—"

"Don't, please!" He put up his hand as if to ward off a physical presentment of the picture. "It's too vivid."

"And meanwhile," she finished inexorably, "you and I will go on gliding into the *scere* and yellow. Youth will be served," she sighed. "But of course we have our compensations."

"Have we?" he echoed.

"Can you ask—when you're one of mine!"

She rested her gaze upon him, serene in the certitudes of proven friendliness, then let it wander off over the big empty room, with its groups of disordered chairs, its scented air, heavy with perfume and flowers and the faint jangle of the caterer's helpers drifting in from apartments beyond.

"Play me something." She waved him to the piano. "Something—what is it the poets say?—gently melancholy. It's a mood suited to our years. You can be melancholy, can't you, Eddie Gorman?" she smiled.

And he smiled back at her rather sadly: "Yes, as melancholy as you wish—to-night."



The Passionate Friends

The Final Installment of the Greatest
Novel of England's Greatest Writer

By *H. G. WELLS*

Illustrated by John Newton Howitt

WHEN Mary and I, after all our years of separation, met there on the veranda of a little out-of-the-way Swiss hotel, it brought one of those moments in life when one is taken unawares. I think our common realization of the futility of masking the reality of our encounter, the hasty search in our minds for some plausible face upon this meeting, must have been very obvious to the lady who observed us. Mary's first thought was for a pseudonym. Mine was to make it plain we met by accident.

"It's Mr.—Stephen!" said Mary.

"It's you!"

"Dropped out of the sky!"

"From over there. I was benighted and got here late."

"Very late?"

"One gleam of light—and a yawning waiter. Or I should have had to break windows. . . And then I meet you!"

Then for a moment or so we were silent, with our sense of the immense gravity of this position growing upon us. A little tow-headed waiter-boy appeared with their coffee and rolls on a tray poised high on his hand.

"You'll have your coffee out here with us?" said Mary.

"Where else?" said I, as though there

were no conceivable alternative, and told the tow-headed waiter.

Belatedly Mary turned to introduce me to her secretary: "My friend Miss Summersley Satchel. Mr.—Stephen." Miss Satchel and I bowed to each other and agreed that the lake was very beautiful in the morning light. "Mr. Stephen," said Mary, in entirely unnecessary explanation, "is an old friend of my mother's. And I haven't seen him for years. How is Mrs. Stephen—and the children?"

I answered briefly and began to tell of my climb down the Titlis. I addressed myself with unnecessary explicitness to Miss Satchel. I did perhaps over-accentuate the extreme fortuitousness of my appearance... From where I stood, the whole course of the previous day after I had come over the shoulder was visible. It seemed a soft little shining pathway to the top, but the dangers of the descent had a romantic intensification in the morning light. "The rule of the game," said I, "is that one stops and waits for daylight. I wonder if anyone keeps that rule."

We talked for a time of mountains, I still standing a little aloof until my coffee came. Miss Summersley Satchel produced that frequent and most unpleasant by-product of a British education, an intelligent interest in etymology. "I wonder," she said, with a brow of ruffled omniscience and eyeing me rather severely with a magnified eye, "why it is *called* Titlis. There must be *some* reason..."

Presently Miss Satchel was dismissed indoors on a transparent excuse and Mary and I were alone together. We eyed one another gravely. Perhaps all the more gravely because of the wild excitement that was quickening our pulse and breathing, and thrilling through our nerves. She pushed back the plate before her and put her dear elbows on the table and dropped her chin between her hands in an attitude that seemed all made of little memories.

"I suppose," she said, "something of this kind was bound to happen."

She turned her eyes to the mountains shining in the morning light. "I'm glad

it has happened in a beautiful place. It might have been—anywhere."

"Last night," I said, "I was thinking of you and wanting to hear your voice again. I thought I did."

"I too. I wonder—if we had some dim perception..."

She scanned my face. "Stephen, you're not much changed. You're looking well. ... But your eyes—they're dog-tired eyes. Have you been working too hard?"

"A conference—what did you call them once?—a Carnegie-ish conference in London. Hot weather and fussing work and endless hours of weak, gray, dusty speeches, and perhaps that clamber over there yesterday was too much. It *was* too much. In India I damaged a leg... I had meant to rest here for a day."

"Well—rest here."

"With you!"

"Why not? Now you are here."

"But—After all, we've promised."

"It's none of our planning, Stephen."

"It seems to me I ought to go right on—so soon as breakfast is over."

She weighed that with just the same still pause, the same quiet movement of lips and eyes that I recalled so well. It was as things had always been between us that she should make her decision first and bring me to it.

"It isn't natural," she decided, "with the sun rising and the day still freshly beginning, that you should go or that I should go. I've wanted to meet you like this and talk about things—ten thousand times. And as for me, Stephen, I *wont* go. And I wont let you go if I can help it. Not this morning, anyhow. No. Go later in the day if you will, and let us two take this one talk that God Himself has given us. We've not planned it. It's His doing, not ours."

I sat, yielding. "I am not so sure of God's participation," I said. "But I know I am very tired, and glad to be with you. I can't tell you how glad. So glad—I think I should weep if I tried to say it..."

"Three, four, five hours perhaps—even if people know. Is it so much worse than thirty minutes? We've broken the rules already; we've been flung together; it's not our doing, Stephen. A little while

longer—adds so little to the offence and means to us——”

“Yes,” I said, “but—if Justin knows?”

“He wont.”

“Your companion?”

There was the briefest moment of reflection. “She’s discretion itself,” she said.

“Still——”

“If he’s going to know, the harm is done. We may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. And he wont know. No one will know.”

“The people here.”

“Nobody’s here. Not a soul who matters. I doubt if they know my name. No one ever talks to me.”

I sat in the bright sunshine, profoundly enervated and quite convinced, but still maintaining out of mere indolence a show of hesitation. . . .

“You take the good things God sends you, Stephen—as I do. You stay and talk with me now, before the curtain falls again. We’ve tired of letters. You stay and talk to me.

“Here we are, Stephen, and it’s the one chance that is ever likely to come to us in all our lives. We’ll keep the point of honor; and you shall go to-day. But don’t let’s drive the point of honor into the quick. Go easy, Stephen, old friend. . . . My dear, my dear! What has happened to you? Have you forgotten? Of course! Is it possible for you to go, mute, with so much that we can say. . . . And these mountains and this sunlight!”

I looked up to see her with her elbows on the table and her hands clasped under her chin; that face close to mine, her dear blue eyes watching me and her lips a little apart.

No other human being has ever had that effect upon me, so that I seem to feel the life and stir in that other body more than I feel my own.

FROM the moment when I confessed my decision to stay, we gave no further thought to the rightfulness or wisdom of spending the next few hours together. We thought only of those hours. Things lent themselves to us. We stood up and walked out in front of the hotel, and there moored to a stake at the edge

of the water was a little leaky punt, the one vessel on the Engstlen See. We would take food with us, as we decided, and row out there to where the vast cliffs came sheer from the water, out of ear-shot or interference, and talk for all the time we had. And I remember now how Mary stood and called to Miss Satchel’s window to tell her of this intention, and how I discovered again that exquisite slender grace I knew so well.

You know, the very rowing out from the shore had in it something sweet and incredible. It was as if we were but dreaming together and might at any moment awaken again, countless miles and a thousand things apart. I rowed slowly with those clumsy Swiss oars that one must thrust forward, breaking the smooth crystal of the lake, and she sat sideways looking forward, saying very little and with much the same sense, I think, of enchantment and unreality. And I saw now for the first time as I watched her over my oars that her face was changed; she was graver and, I thought, stronger than the Mary I had known.

Even now I can still doubt if that boat and lake were real. And yet I remember even minute and irrelevant details of the day’s impressions with an extraordinary and exquisite vividness. Perhaps it is that very luminous distinctness which distinguishes these events from the common experiences of life and puts them so above the quality of things that are ordinarily real.

We rowed slowly past a great headland and into the bay at the upper end of the water. The place where we landed was a kind of beach left by the recession of the ice; all the rocks immediately about us were ice-worn, and the place was paved with ice-worn boulders. Two huge bluffs put their foreheads together above us and hid the glacier from us, but one could feel the near presence of ice in the air. Out between them boiled a little torrent, and spread into a hundred intercommunicating channels amidst the great pebbles. And these pebbles were covered by a network of marvelously gnarled and twisted stems bearing little leaves and blossoms, a network at once very ancient and very fresh, giving a pe-

cular gentleness and richness to the Alpine severity that had dwarfed and tangled them. It was astounding that any plant could find nourishment among those stones. The great headland, with patches of yellowish old snow still lingering here and there upon its upper masses, had crept insensibly between us and the remote hotel and now hid it altogether. There was nothing to remind us of the world that had separated us, except that old and leaky boat we had drawn up upon the stones at the limpid water's edge.

"It is as if we had come out of life together," she whispered, giving a voice to my thought.

She sat down upon a boulder and I sat on a lower slab a yard or so away, and we looked at one another. "It's still unreal," she said.

I felt awkward and at a loss as I sat there before her, as a man unused to drawing-rooms might feel in the presence of a strange hostess.

"You are so *you*," I said, "so altogether my nearest thing—and so strange too, so far off, that I feel—shy..."

"I'm shy," I repeated. "I feel that if I speak loudly all this will vanish..."

I looked about me. "But surely this is the most beautiful place in the whole world! Is it indeed in the world?"

"Stephen, my dear," she began presently, "what a strange thing life is! Strange! The disproportions! The things that will not fit together. The little things that eat us up, and the beautiful things that might save us and don't save us, don't seem indeed to have any meaning in regard to ordinary sensible affairs... This *beauty*..."

"Do you remember, Stephen, how, long ago in the old park, you and I talked about immortality and you said then you did not want to know anything of what comes after life. Even now do you want to know? You are too busy and I am not busy enough. I want to be sure, not only to know, but to know that it is so, that this life—no, not *this* life, but that life—is only the bleak twilight of the morning. I think death—just dead death—after the life I have had, is the most impossible of ends... You don't want—particular-

ly? I want to, passionately. I *want* to live again—out of this body, Stephen, and all that it carries with it—to be free—as beautiful things are free. To be free as this is free—an exquisite, clean freedom..."

"I can't believe that the life of this earth is all that there is for us—or why should we ever think it strange? Why should we still find the ordinary matter-of-fact things of every day strange? We do—because they aren't—us... Eating—stuffing into ourselves thin slices of what were queer little hot and eager beasts... The perpetual need to do such things. And all the mad fury of sex, Stephen!... We don't live, we suffocate in our living bodies. They storm and rage and snatch; it isn't *us*, Stephen, really. It can't be us. It's all so excessive—if it is anything more than the first furious rush into existence of beings that will go on—go on at last to quite beautiful real things. Like this, perhaps. To-day the world is beautiful indeed, with the sun shining and love shining and you, my dear, so near to me... It's so incredible that you and I must part to-day. It's as if—some one told me the sun was a little mad. It's so perfectly natural to be with you again..."

Her voice sank. She leaned a little forward towards me. "Stephen, suppose that you and I were dead to-day. Suppose that when you imagined you were climbing yesterday, you died. Suppose that yesterday you died and that you just thought you were still climbing as you made your way to me. Perhaps you are dead up there on the mountain and I am lying dead in my room in this hotel, and this is the Great Beginning..."

"Stephen, I am talking nonsense because I am so happy to be with you here..."

FOR a time we said very little. Then irregularly, disconnectedly, we began to tell each other things about ourselves.

The substance of our lives seemed strangely objective that day; we had, as it were, come to one another, clean out of our common conditions. She told me of her troubles and her secret weaknesses;

we bared our spirits and confessed. Both of us had the same tale of mean and angry and hasty impulses; both of us could find kindred inconsistencies, both had an exalted assurance that the other would understand completely and forgive and love. She talked for the most part—she talked much more than I, with a sort of wonder at the things that had happened to her, and for long spaces we did not talk at all or feel the need of talking; and what seems very strange to me now, seeing that we had been impassioned lovers, we never kissed; we never kissed at all; I do not even remember that I thought of kissing her. We had a shyness between us that kept us a little apart, and I cannot remember that we ever touched one another except that for a time she took me and led me by the hand towards a little place of starry flowers that had drawn her eyes and which she wished me to see. Already for us two our bodies were dead and gone. We were shy, shy of any contact; we were a little afraid of one another; there was a kind of awe between us that we had met again.

And in that strange and beautiful place her fancy that we were dead together had a fitness that I cannot possibly convey to you. I cannot give you by any writing the light and the sweet freshness of that high desolation. You would need to go there. What was lovely in our talk, being said in that setting, would seem but a rambling discourse were I to write it down—as I believe that even now I could write it down, word for word, almost, every thought of it, so fresh does it remain with me. . . .

My son, some moments are eternal. It seems to me that as I write to tell you of this I am telling you not of something that happened two years ago, but of a thing immortal. It is as if Mary and I were together there holding the realities of our lives before us as though they were little sorry tales written in books upon our knees. . . .

IT was still in the early afternoon that we came down again across the meandering ice-water streams to our old boat, and pushed off and rowed slowly out of

that magic corner back to every-day again. . . .

Little we knew to what it was we rowed.

As we glided across the water and rounded the headland and came slowly into view of the hotel again, Mary was reminded of our parting and for a little while she was disposed to make me remain. "If you could stay a little longer," she said. "Another day? If any harm is done, it's done."

"It has been beautiful," I said, "this meeting. It's just as if—when I was so jaded and discouraged that I could have put my work aside and despaired altogether—some power had said, 'Have you forgotten the friendship I gave you?' . . . But we shall have had our time. We've met—we've seen one another, we've heard one another. We've hurt no one. . . ."

"You will go?"

"To-day. Before sunset. Isn't it right that I should go?"

"Stay," she whispered, with a light in her eyes.

"No. I dare not."

She did not speak for a long time.

"Of course," she said at last, "you're right. You only said—I would have said it for you if you had not. You're so right, Stephen. . . . I suppose, poor silly little things, that if you stayed we should certainly begin making love to each other. It would be—necessary. We should fence about a little and then there it would be. No barrier—to stop us. And neither of us wants it to happen. It isn't what we want. You would become urgent, I suppose, and I should be—coquettish. In spite of ourselves that power would make us puppets. As if already we hadn't made love. . . . I could find it in my heart now. . . . Stephen, I could *make* you stay. . . .

"Oh! Why are we so tormented, Stephen? In the next world we shall meet, and this will trouble us no longer. The love will be there—oh, the love will be there, like something that has at last got itself fully born, got itself free from some queer, clinging seed-case. . . .

"We shall be rid of jealousy, Stephen, that inflammation of the mind, that bit-

terness, that pitiless sore, so that I sha'n't be tormented by the thought of Rachel, and she will be able to tolerate me. She was so sweet and wonderful a girl—with those dark eyes. And I've never done her justice—never. Nor she me. I snatched you from her. I snatched you...

"Some day we shall be different... All this putting oneself round another person like a fence, against everyone else, almost against everything else; it's so wicked, so fierce.

"It's so possible to be different. Sometimes now, sometimes for long parts of a day I have no base passions at all—even in this life. To be like that always! But I can't see clearly how these things can be; one dreams of them in a kind of luminous mist, and if one looks directly at them, they vanish again..."

AND at last we came to the landing, and moored the little boat and walked up the winding path to the hotel. The dull pain of separation was already upon us.

I think we had forgotten Miss Summersley Satchel altogether. But she appeared as we sat down to tea at that same table at which we had breakfasted, and joined us as a matter of course. Conceivably she found the two animated friends of the morning had become rather taciturn. Indeed, there came a lapse of silence so portentous that I roused myself to effort and told her, all over again, as I realized afterwards, the difficulties that had benighted me upon Titlis. Then Miss Satchel regaled Mary with some particulars of the various comings and goings of the hotel. I became anxious to end this tension and went into the inn to pay my bill and get my knapsack. When I came out, Mary stood up.

"I'll come just a little way with you, Stephen," she said, and I could have fancied the glasses of the companion flashed to hear the surname of the morning reappear a Christian name in the afternoon...

"Is that woman behind us safe?" I asked, breaking the silence as we went up the mountain side.

Mary looked over her shoulder for a contemplative second.

"She's always been—discretion itself."

We thought no more of Miss Satchel.

"This parting," said Mary, "is the worst of the price we have to pay... Now it comes to the end, there seem a thousand things one hasn't said..."

And presently she came back to that. "We sha'n't remember this so much, perhaps. It was there we met, over there in the sunlight—among those rocks. I suppose—perhaps—we managed to say something..."

As the ascent grew steeper it became clear that if I was to reach the Melch See Inn by nightfall, our moment for parting had come. And with a "Well," and a white-lipped smile and a glance at the argus-eyed hotel, she held out her hand to me. "I shall live on this, brother Stephen," she said, "for years."

"I too," I answered...

It was wonderful to stand and face her there, and see her real and living with the warm sunlight on her, and her face one glowing tenderness. We clasped hands; all the warm life of our hands met and clung and parted.

I went on alone up the winding path—it zigzags up the mountain side in full sight of the hotel for the better part of an hour—climbing steadily higher and looking back and looking back until she was just a little strip of white—that halted and seemed to wave to me. I waved back and found myself weeping. "You fool!" I said to myself, "Go on;" and it was by an effort that I kept on my way instead of running back to her again. Presently the curvature of the slope came up between us and hid her altogether, hid the hotel, hid the lakes and the cliffs...

It seemed to me that I could not possibly see her any more. It was as if I knew that sun had set forever.

I LAY at the Melch See Inn that night, and rose betimes and started down that wild gorge in the early morning light. I walked to Sachseln, caught an early train to Lucerne and went on in the afternoon to Como. And there I stayed in the sunshine taking a boat and

rowing alone far up the lake and lying in it, thinking of love and friendship and the accidents and significance of my life, and for the most part not thinking at all but feeling, feeling the glow of our meeting and the finality of our separation, as one feels the clear glow of a sunset when the wind rises and the cold night draws near. Everything was pervaded by the sense of her. Just over those mountains, I thought, is Mary. I was alone in my boat, but her presence filled the sky. It seemed to me that at any moment I could go to her. And the last vestige of any cloud between us for anything we had done or failed to do in these crises of distress and separation, had vanished and gone altogether.

In the afternoon I wrote to Rachel. I had not written to her for three days, and even now I told her nothing of my meeting with Mary. I had not written partly because I could not decide whether I should tell her of that or not; in the end I tried to hide it from her. It seemed a little thing in regard to her, a thing that could not hurt her, a thing as detached from her life and as inconsecutive as a dream in my head.

Three days later I reached Milan, a day before the formal opening of the Peace Congress. But I found a telegram had come that morning to the Poste Restante to banish all thought of my pacific mission from my mind. It came from Paris and its blue ribbon of text ran:

Come back at once to London. Justin has been told of our meeting and is resolved upon divorce. Will do all in my power to explain and avert but feel you should know at once.

There are some things so monstrously destructive to all we hold dear that for a time it is impossible to believe them. I remember now that as I read that amazing communication through—at the first reading it was a little difficult to understand because the Italian operator had guessed at one or two of the words—no real sense of its meaning came to me. That followed sluggishly. I felt as one might feel when one opens some offensive anonymous letter.

"What nonsense!" I said, faint-heartedly. I stood for a time at my bedroom window trying to shake this fact altogether off my mind. But it stayed, and became more and more real. Suddenly with a start I perceived it was real. I had to do things forthwith.

I rang the bell and asked for an *Orario*. "I sha'n't want these rooms. I have to go back to England," I said. "Yes—I have had bad news."...

"WE'VE only got to explain," I told myself a hundred times during that long sleepless journey. The thundering wheels so close beneath my head echoed: "Explain. Oh, yes! Explain! Explain! Explain!"

And something, a voice to which I would not listen, urged: "Suppose they do not choose to believe what you explain."

When I sat face to face with Maxwell Hartington, my solicitor, in his ink-splashed, dirty, yellow-grained room with its rows of black tin boxes, I could no longer ignore that possibility. Maxwell Hartington sat back in his chair after his fashion, listening to my story, breathing noisily through his open mouth, perspiring little beads and looking more out of condition than ever. I never knew a man so wine-sodden and so sharp-witted.

"That's all very well, Stratton," he said, "between ourselves. Very unfortunate and all that sort of thing. But it doesn't satisfy Justin, evidently; and we've got to put a different look on it if we can, before we go before a jury. You see"—he seemed to be considering and rejecting unpalatable phrases—"they won't understand."

"But," I said, "after all—a mere chance of the same hotel. There must be more evidence than that."

"You spent the night in adjacent rooms," he said drily.

"Adjacent rooms!" I cried.

He regarded me for a moment with something bordering on admiration. "Didn't you know?" he said.

"No."

"They've routed that out. You were sleeping with your two heads within a

yard of one another, anyhow. Thirty-six you had, and she had thirty-seven."

"But," I said and stopped.

Maxwell Hartington's admiration gave place, I think, to a slight resentment at my sustained innocence. "And Lady Mary changed rooms with her secretary two nights before—to be near the vacant room. The secretary went into number twelve on the floor below—a larger room, at thirteen francs a day, and one not exposed to the early daylight..."

He turned over a paper on his desk. "You didn't know, of course," he said. "But what I want to have"—and his voice grew wrathful—"is sure evidence that you didn't know. No jury on earth is going to believe you didn't know. No jury! Why,"—his mask dropped—"no man on earth is going to believe a yarn like that! If that's all you have, Stratton—"

OUR London house was not shut up—two servants were there on board-wages against the possibility of such a temporary return as I was now making—Rachel was away with you three children at Cromingham. I had not told her I was returning to London, and I had put up at one of my clubs. Until I had had a second interview with Maxwell Hartington I still would not let myself think that it was possible that Mary and I would fail in our explanations. We had the common confidence of habitually unchallenged people that our word would be accepted. I had hoped indeed to get the whole affair settled and abolished without anything of it coming to Rachel's ears. Then at my leisure I should be able to tell her exactly how things had come about. But each day made it clearer that things were not going to be settled, that the monstrous and the incredible was going to happen and that Justin had set his mind implacably upon a divorce. My sense of complete innocence had already been shaken by Maxwell Hartington; I had come to perceive that we had been amazingly indiscreet; I was beginning to think we had been criminally indiscreet.

I saw Maxwell Hartington for a second time, and it became clear to me I

must abandon any hope of keeping things further from Rachel. I took my luggage round to my house, to the great astonishment of the two servants—they had supposed of course that I was in Italy—and then went down on the heels of a telegram to Rachel. I forget the wording of that telegram, but it was as little alarming as possible; I think I said something about "back in London for documents; shall try to get down to you." I did not specify any particular train or indeed state definitely that I was coming that day.

I had never been to Cromingham before. I went to the house you occupied on the Esplanade and learned that you were all upon the beach. I walked along the sea wall scrutinizing the various bright groups of children and nursemaids and holiday people that were scattered over the sands. It was a day of blazing sunshine, and between the bright sky and the silver drabs of the sand stretched the low levels of a sea that had its customary green-gray touched for once with something of the sapphire glow of the Mediterranean. Here and there were gay little umbrella tents or canvas shelters, and a bather or so, and pink and white wading children, broke the dazzling edge of foam. And I sought you with a kind of reluctance, as though finding you would bring nearer the black, irrational disaster that hung over us all.

And when I found you at last you were all radiantly happy and healthy, the prettiest of families, and only your mother was touched with any gravity deeper than the joy of sunshine and sea. You and Mademoiselle Potin—in those days her ministrations were just beginning—were busy constructing a great sea-wall that should really and truly stop the advancing tide. Little Rachel was a little apart, making with infinite contentment an endless multitude of conical sand pies with her little tin pail. Margaret, a pink, inarticulate lump, scrambled in the warm sand under Jessica's care. Your mother sat and watched you—thoughtfully. And before any of you knew that I was there my shadow fell across you all.

You accepted my appearance when I

ought to have been in Italy with the unquestioning confidence with which you still take all my comings and goings. For you, Italy, America, any place is just around the corner. I was kissed with affection but haste, and you got back to your sand-works as speedily as possible. I inspected Little Rachel's mounds—she was giving them the names of her various aunts and uncles—and patted the crowing Margaret, who ignored me. Rachel had sprung to her feet and kissed me and now hovered radiant over me as I caressed you youngsters. It was all so warm, so real, that for an instant the dark threat that hung over us all vanished from my skies, to return with the force of a blow.

"And what has brought you back?" said Rachel. "I had expected a month of widowhood. What can have brought you back?"

The dancing gladness in her eyes vanished swiftly as she waited for an answer to her question. She caught the note of tragedy from my face. "Why have you come back from Italy?" she asked.

"Rachel," I said taking her arm, with a desolating sense of the futility in my gesture of protection, "let us walk along the beach. I want to tell you something—something rather complicated."

"Is there going to be war, Stephen?" she asked abruptly.

It seemed then that this question which merely concerned the welfare of a hundred million people or so, and pain, destruction and disaster beyond measure, was the most trivial of digressions.

"No," I said. "I haven't thought about the war."

"But I thought—you were thinking of nothing else."

"This has put it out of my head. It's something—something disastrous to us."

"Something has happened to our money?"

"I wish that was all."

"Then what is it?" Her mind flashed out. "It has something to do with Mary Justin."

"How did you know that?"

"I guessed."

"Well. It is. You see—in Switzerland we met."

"You met?"

"By accident. She had been staying at the hotel on Engstlen Alp."

"You slept there?" cried Rachel.

"I didn't know she was in the hotel until the next day."

"And then you came away?"

"That day."

"But you talked together?"

"Yes."

"And for some reason—you never told me, Stephen! You never told me. And you met. But—why is this, disaster?"

"Because Justin knows and he means to divorce her—and it may be he will succeed...."

Rachel's face had become white; for some time she said nothing. Then slowly, "And if he had not known and done that—I should never have known."

I had no answer to make to that. It was true. Rachel's face was very still, and her eyes stared at the situation laid bare to her.

"When you began," she choked presently, "when she wrote—I knew—I felt—"

She ceased for fear she might weep, and for a time we walked in silence.

"I suppose," she said desperately at last, "he will get his divorce."

"I am afraid he will."

"There's no evidence—you didn't..."

"No."

"And I never dreamed—!"

Then her passion tore at her. "Stephen, my dear," she wept, "you kept faith with me as a husband should? It was an accident—a real accident—and there was no planning for you to meet together? It was as you say? I've never doubted your word ever—I've never doubted you."

Well, at any rate I could answer that plainly, and I did.

"And you know, Stephen," she said, "I believe you. And I *can't* believe you. My heart is tormented. Why did you write to her? Why did you two write and go on writing? And why did you tell me nothing of that meeting? I believe you because I can't do anything but believe you. It would kill me not to believe you in a thing that came so near to us. And yet, there it is, like a knife being twisted in my heart—that you met."

Should I have known of your meeting, Stephen—ever? I know I'm talking badly for you.... But this thing strikes me suddenly. Out of this clear, beautiful sky! And the children there—so happy in the sunshine! I was so happy. So happy! With you coming.... It will mean shames and law-courts and newspapers, losses of friends, losses of money and freedom.... My mother and my people!... And you and all the work you do!... People will never forget it, never forgive it. They will say you promised.... If she had never written, if she had kept to her bargain—"

"We should still have met."

"Stephen!.... Stephen, you must bear with me...."

"This is a thing," I said, "that falls as you say out of the sky. It seemed so natural—for her to write.... And the meeting.... it is like some tremendous disaster of nature. I do not feel I have deserved it. It is—irrational. But there it is, Rachel of my heart, and we have to face it. Whatever happens we have to go on. It doesn't alter the work we have to do. If it clips our wings—we have to hop along with clipped wings.... For you—I wish it could spare you. And she—she too is a victim, Rachel."

"She need not have written," said Rachel. "She need not have written. And then if you had met—"

She could not go on with that.

"It is so hard," I said, "to ask you to be just to her—and me. I wish I could have come to you and married you—without all that legacy—of things remembered.... I was what I was.... One can't shake off a thing in one's blood. And besides—besides—"

I stopped helplessly.

AND then Mary came herself to tell me there would be no divorce.

She came to me unexpectedly. I had returned to town that evening, and next morning as I was sitting down in my study to answer some unimportant questions Maxwell Hartington had sent me, my parlor maid appeared. "Can you speak," she asked, "to Lady Mary Justin?"

I stood up to receive my visitor.

She came in, a tall, dark figure, and stood facing me in silence until the door had closed behind her. Her face was white and drawn and very grave. She stooped a little; I could see she had had no sleep; never before had I seen her face marked by pain. And she hesitated.... "My dear!" I said, "why have you come to me?"

I put a chair for her and she sat down. For a moment she controlled herself with difficulty. She put her hands over her eyes; she seemed on the verge of bitter weeping....

"I came," she said at last.... "I came. I had to come.... to see you."

I sat down in a chair beside her.

"It wasn't wise," I said, "But—never mind. You look so tired, my dear!"

She sat quite still for a little while.

Then she moved her arm as though she felt for me blindly, and I put my arms about her and drew her head to my shoulder and she wept....

"I knew," she sobbed, "if I came to you...."

Presently her weeping was over.

"Get me a little cold water, Stephen," she said. "Let me have a little cold water on my face. I've got my courage now again. Just then—I was down too low. Yes—cold water. Because I want to tell you—things you will be glad to hear...."

"You see, Stephen," she said—and now all her self-possession had returned—"there mustn't be a divorce. I've thought it all out. And there needn't be a divorce."

"Needn't be?"

"No."

"What do you mean?"

"I can stop it."

"But how?"

"I can stop it. I can manage—I can make a bargain.... It's very sweet, dear Stephen, to be here talking to you again."

She stood up.

"Sit at your desk, my dear," she said. "I'm all right now. That water was good. How good cold things can be! Sit down at your desk and let me sit here. And then I will talk to you. I've had such a time, my dear. Ah!"

She paused and stuck her elbows on the desk and looked me in the eyes. And

suddenly that sweet, frank smile of hers swept like sunshine across the wintry desolation of her face. "We've both been having a time," she said. "This odd little world—it's battered us with its fists. For such a little. And we were both so ridiculously happy. Do you remember it, the rocks and the sunshine and all those twisted and tangled little plants? And how the boat leaked and you baled it out! And the parting, and how you trudged up that winding path away from me! A gray figure that stopped and waved—a little figure—such a virtuous figure— And then, this storm! This awful hullabaloo! Lawyers, curses, threats— And Stella Summersley Satchel like a Fury of denunciation. What hatred that woman has hidden from me! It must have accumulated. . . . It's terrible to think, Stephen, how much I must have tried her. . . . Oh! how far away those Alps are now, Stephen! Like something in another life. . . . And here we are!—among the consequences."

"But— you were saying we could stop the divorce."

"Yes. We can. I can. But I wanted to see you—before I did. Somehow I don't feel lonely with you. I had to see you It's good to see you."

She looked me in the face. Her tired eyes lighted with a gleam of her former humor.

"Have you thought," she asked, "of all that will happen if there is a divorce?"

"I mean to fight every bit of it."

"They'll beat you."

"We'll see that."

"But they will. And then?"

"Why should one meet disaster half-way?"

"Stephen?" she said, "what will happen to you when I am not here to make you look at things? Because I sha'n't be here. Not within reach of you. . . . There are times when I feel like a mother to you. Never more than now. . . ."

And then with rapid touches she began to picture the disaster before me. She pictured the court and our ineffectual denials; she made me realize the storm of hostility that was bound to burst over us. "And think of me," she

said. "Stripped I shall be, an outcast."

"Not while I live!"

"But what can you do for me? You will have Rachel. How can you stand by me? You can't be cruel to Rachel. You know you can't be cruel to Rachel. Look me in the face, Stephen; tell me. Yes. . . . Then how can you stand by me?"

"Somehow!" I cried foolishly, and stopped.

"They'll use me to break your back with costs and damages. There'll be those children of yours to think of. . . ."

"My God!" I cried aloud. "Why do you torment me? Haven't I thought enough of those things? . . . Haven't I seen the ruin and the shame, the hopeless trap, men's trust in me gone, my work scattered and ended again, my children growing up to hear this and that exaggeration of our story. And you— All the bravery of your life scattered and wasted. The thing will pursue us all, cling to us. It will be all the rest of our lives for us. . . ."

I covered my face with my hands.

When I looked up, her face was white and still, and full of a strange tenderness. "I wouldn't have you, Stephen—I wouldn't have you be cruel to Rachel. . . . I just wanted to know—something. . . . But we're wandering. We're talking nonsense. Because as I said, there need be no divorce. There will be no divorce at all. That's what I came to tell you. I shall have to pay—in a way, Stephen. . . . Not impossibly. Don't think it is anything impossible. . . ."

Then she bit her lips and sat still. . . .

"My dear," I whispered, "if we had taken one another at the beginning. . . ."

But she went on with her own thoughts.

"You love those little children of yours," she said. "And that trusting girl-wife. . . . Of course you love them. They're yours. Oh! they're so deeply yours. . . . Yours. . . ."

"Oh my dear! don't torture me! I do love them. But I love you too."

"No," she said, "not as you do them."

I made a movement of protest.

"No," she said, whitely radiant with a serenity I had never seen before in her

face. "You love me with your brain. With your soul if you like. I *know*, my poor bleeding Stephen! Aren't those tears there? Don't mind my seeing them, Stephen.... Poor dear! Poor dear!... You love *them* with your inmost heart. Why should you mind that I see you do?... All my life I've been wrong, Stephen, and now I know too late. It's the things we own we love, the things we buy with our lives.... Always I have been hard, I've been a little hard.... Stephen, my dear, I loved you, always I have loved you, and always I have tried to keep myself.... It's too late.... I don't know why I am talking like this... But you see I can make a bargain now—it's not an impossible bargain—and save you and your wife and save your children—"

"But how?" I said, still doubting.

"Never mind how, Stephen. Don't ask me how now. Nothing very difficult. Easy. But I shall write you no more letters—see you—no more. Never. And that's why I had to come, you see, why I was able to come to you, just to see you and say good-by to you, and take leave of you, dear Love that I threw away and loved too late...."

She closed both her eyes, and I was struck by her pallor; then she opened them and faced me, a sweet, flushed, living thing, with a tear coursing down her cheek, and her mouth now firm and steady.

"You can stop this divorce?" I said. "But how, Mary?"

"No, don't ask me how. At a price. It's a bargain. No, no! Don't think that,—a bargain with Justin, but not degrading. Don't, my dear, let the thought of it distress you. I have to give earnest.... Never, dear, never through all the dusty rest of life again will you and I speak together. Never! Even if we come face to face once more—no word...."

"Mary," I said, "what is it you have to do? You speak as if—What is it Justin demands?"

"No! do not ask me that.... Tell me—you see we've so much to talk about, Stephen—tell me of all you are going to do. Everything. Because I've got to make a great vow of renunciation—of

you. Not to think again—not even to think of you again.... No, no. I'm not even to look for you in the papers any more. There're to be no tricks this time. And so you see I want to fill up my mind with you. To store myself with you. Tell me your work is worth it—that it's not like the work of everyone. Tell me, Stephen—that. I want to believe that—tremendously. Don't be modest now. That will be cruel. I want to believe that I am at last to do something that is worth doing, something not fruitless...."

"Are you to go into seclusion?" I asked suddenly. "To be a nun—?"

"It is something like that," she said; "very like that. But I have promised—practically—not to tell you that. Tell me your soul, Stephen, now. Give me something I may keep in my mind through—through all those years of waiting...."

"But where?" I cried. "What years of waiting?"

"In a lonely place, my dear—among mountains. High and away. Very beautiful, but lonely. A lake. Great rocks... Yes—like that place. So odd... I shall have so much time to think, and I shall have no papers—no news. I mustn't talk to you of that. Don't let me talk to you of that. I want to hear about this world, this world I am going to leave, and how you think you are going on fighting in the hot and dusty struggle—to make the world cool and kind and reasonable, to train minds better, to broaden ideas.... all those things you believe in. All those things you believe in and stick to—even when they are dull. Now I am leaving it, I begin to see how fine it is—to fight as you want to fight. A tiresome, inglorious, lifelong fight...."

AND then suddenly I read her purpose.

"Mary," I cried, and stood up and laid my hand upon her arm, "tell me what is it you mean to do. What do you mean to do?"

She looked up at me defensively and for a moment neither of us spoke.

"Mary," I said, and could not say what was in my thoughts.

"You are wrong," she lied at last. . . .

She stood up too and faced me. I held her shoulder and looked into her eyes.

The gong of my little clock broke the silence.

"I must go, Stephen," she said. "I did not see how the time was slipping by."

I began to entreat her and she to deny. "You don't understand," she said, "you don't understand. Stephen!— I had hoped you would understand. You see life—not as I see it. I wanted—all sorts of splendid things and you—begin to argue. You are shocked, you refuse to understand. . . . No. No. Take your hands off me, Stephen dear, and let me go. Let me go."

"But," I said, stupid and persistent, "what are you going to do?"

"I've told you, Stephen, I've told you as much as I can tell you. And you think—this foolish thing. As though I could do that! Stephen, if I promise, will you let me go?"

MY mind leaps from that to the moment in the afternoon, when torn by intolerable distresses and anxiety I knocked and rang, and again knocked at the door of the house she occupied in South Street, with the intention of making one last appeal to her to live—if, indeed, it was death she had in mind. I had let her go from me and instantly a hundred neglected things had come into my head. I could go away with her, I could threaten to die with her; it seemed to me that nothing in all the world mattered if only I could thrust back the dark hand of death to which she had so manifestly turned. I knew, I knew all along that her extorted promise would not bind her. I knew and I let the faintest shadow of uncertainty weaken and restrain me. And I went to her too late. I saw instantly that I was too late when the door opened and showed me the scared face of a young footman whose eyes were red with tears.

"Are you Doctor ———?" he asked of my silence.

"I want—" I said. "I must speak to Lady Mary."

He was wordless for a moment. "She

—she died, sir," he said. "She's died suddenly." His face quivered; he was blubbing. He couldn't say anything more; he stood sniveling in the doorway.

For some moments I remained confronting him as if I would dispute his words. Some things the mind contests in the face of invincible conviction. One wants to thrust back time. . . .

CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

The Arraignment of Jealousy.

I SIT here in this graciously proportioned little room which I shall leave forever next week, for already your mother begins to pack for England again. I look out upon the neat French garden that I have watched the summer round, and before me is the pile of manuscript that has grown here, the story of my friendship and love for Mary and of its tragic end.

Life is so much fuller than any book can be. All this story can be read, I suppose, in a couple of hours or so, but I have been living and reflecting upon and reconsidering the substance of it for over forty years. I do not see how this book can give you any impression but that of a career all strained upon the frame of one tragic relationship, yet no life, unless it is a very short young life, can have that simplicity. Of all the many things I have found beautiful and wonderful, Mary was the most wonderful to me; she is in my existence like a sunlit lake seen among mountains; of all the edges by which life has wrought me she was the keenest. Nevertheless she was not all my life, nor the form of all my life. For a time after her death I could endure nothing of my home, I could not bear the presence of your mother or you; I hated the possibility of consolation. I went away into Italy, and it was only by an enormous effort that I could resume my interest in that scheme of work to which my life is given. But it is manifest I still live, I live and work and feel and share beauty. . . .

It seems to me more and more as I

live longer, that most poetry and most literature, and particularly the literature of the past, is discordant with the vastness and variety, the reserves and resources and recuperations of life as we live it to-day. It is the expression of life under cruder and more rigid conditions than ours, lived by people who loved and hated more naively, aged sooner and died younger than we do. Solitary persons and single events dominated them as they do not dominate us. We range wider, last longer, and escape more and more from intensity towards understanding. And already this astounding blow begins to take its place among other events, as a thing strange and terrible indeed, but related to all the strangeness and mystery of life, part of the universal mysteries of despair and futility and death that have troubled my consciousness since childhood.

For a time the death of Mary obscured her life for me, but now her living presence is more in my mind again. I begin to see that it is the reality of her existence and not the accidents of her end that matter most. It signifies less that she should have flung out of life when it seemed that her living could only have meant disaster to herself and to all she loved, than that all her life should have been hampered and restricted. Through all her life this brave and fine and beautiful being was, for the most part of her possibilities, wasted in a splendid setting, magnificently wasted if you will, but wasted.

IT was that idea of waste that dominated my mind in a strange interview I had with Justin. For it became necessary for me to see Justin in order that we should stamp out the whispers against her that followed her death. He had made it seem an accidental death due to an overdose of a narcotic she employed, but he had not been able to obliterate altogether the beginnings of his divorce proceedings. There had been talk on the part of clerks and possible witnesses. But of all that, I need not tell you here; what matters is that Justin and I could meet without hatred or violence. I met a Justin gray-haired and, it

seemed to me, physically shrunken, more than ever slow-speaking, with his habit of attentive silences more marked and that dark scar spread beyond his brows.

We had come to our parting; we had done our business with an affectation of emotional aloofness, and then suddenly he gripped me by the arm. "Stratton," he said, "we two—we killed her. We tore her to pieces between us...."

I made no answer to this outbreak.

"We tore her to pieces," he repeated. "It's so silly. One gets angry—like an animal."

I became grotesquely anxious to assure him that, indeed, she and I had been, as they say, innocent throughout our last day together. "You were wrong in that," I said. "She kept her faith with you. We never planned to meet and when we met—If we had been brother and sister—Indeed there was nothing."

"I suppose," he said, "I ought to be glad of that. But now it doesn't seem to matter very much. We killed her.... What does that matter to me now?"

AND it is upon this effect of sweet and beautiful possibilities, caught in the net of animal jealousies and thoughtless motives and ancient rigid institutions, that I would end this writing. In Mary, it seems to me, I found both womanhood and fellowship. I found what many have dreamed of, love and friendship freely given, and I could do nothing but clutch at her to make her my possession. I would not permit her to live except as a part of my life.

I see her now and understand her better than when she was alive; I recall things that she said and wrote, and it is clear to me, clearer perhaps than it ever was to her, that she, with her resentment at being in any sense property, her self-reliant thought, her independence of standard, was the very prototype of that sister-lover who must replace the seductive and abject womanhood, owned, mastered and deceiving, who waste the world to-day. And she was owned, she was mastered, forced into concealment. What alternative was there for her?

What alternative is there for any woman?

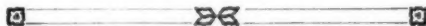
She might perhaps have kept her freedom by some ill-paid work and at the price of every other impulse in her swift and eager nature. She might have become one of those poor neuters, an independent woman.... Life was made impossible for her and she was forced to die, according to the fate of all untimely things. She was destroyed, not merely by the unconsidered, undisciplined passions of her husband and her lover, but by the vast tradition that sustains and enforces the subjugation of her sex. What I had from her, and what she was, is but a mere intimation of all that she and I might have made of each other and the world.

And perhaps in this story I have said enough for you to understand why Mary has identified herself with something world-wide, has added to herself a symbolical value, and why it is I find in the whole crowded spectacle of mankind, a quality that is also hers, a sense of fine things entangled and stifled and unable to free themselves from the ancient limiting jealousies which law and custom embody. For I know that a growing multitude of men and women outwear

the ancient ways. The blood-stained organized jealousies of religious intolerance, the delusions of nationality and cult and race, that black hatred which simple people and young people and common people cherish against all that is not in the likeness of themselves, cease to be the undisputed ruling forces of our collective life. We want to emancipate our lives from this slavery and these stupidities, from dull hatreds and suspicion. The ripening mind of our race tires of these boorish and brutish and childish things. A spirit that is like hers, arises and increases in human affairs, a spirit that demands freedom and gracious living as our inheritance too long deferred, and I who loved her so blindly and narrowly now love her spirit with a dawning understanding.

I will not be content with that compromise of jealousies which is the established life of humanity to-day. I give myself, and if I can I will give you, to the destruction of jealousy and of the forms and shelters and instruments of jealousy, both in my own self and in the thought and laws and usage of the world.

T H E E N D



In the MATTER of DISTANCE

By JOHN BARTON OXFORD

FROM West Cherry Street to Beverly Avenue, as the crow flies, is perhaps a mile and a half; by devious streets and avenues—up Middlesex, down Crawford, along the entire length of Westmoreland Avenue—it is considerably over two miles; but, if you are judging by standards, social, intellectual and ethical, a good half the circumference of the earth lies between West Cherry Street and Beverly Avenue.

ILLUSTRATED
BY B. CORY
KILVERT

West Cherry Street is noisy, unclean, dilapidated, out-at-the-elbows; Beverly Avenue— isn't. In West Cherry Street swarms of noisy youngsters, left to their own devices, amuse themselves with hazardous games which entail much swift-ness and much keenness of eye to avert their untimely ends beneath the wheels of passing drays; the children of Beverly Avenue—far less in number than those of West Cherry Street, although Beverly Avenue is a much longer thor-

oughfare—amuse themselves much more sanely and safely and without the shrill, car-splitting whoops of the West Cherryrites, because they are carefully herded by trim and white-capped nursemaids whose keen eyes are solely for their small charges—unless one of the good-looking young mounted policemen happens along.

The property owners of Beverly Avenue and the humble rent-payers of West Cherry Street, you may readily surmise, are not at all the same breed of cats. West Cherry Street is West Cherry Street, and Beverly Avenue is Beverly Avenue, and there you are! They are a mile and a half distant, two miles apart, twelve-thousand-odd miles removed—

just whichever way you happen to compute it. And sometimes none of these reckonings apply and you have to compute that distance on an entirely new basis. For instance:

A limousine rolled away from Number 684 Beverly Avenue. It was a six-cylinder limousine of an ultra-expensive make. Its brass glistened; its polished sides shone; there was a big bunch of orchids in the flower-holder just behind the liveried chauffeur's back.

In the limousine were Mr. Malcom Whiteside and his son-in-law, Robert Whittleby. Mr. Robert Whittleby had said just before entering the car:

"To the White Star Docks, William?"



As he said it, Mr. Malcom Whiteside had hitched uneasily on the cushions and turned to look anxiously at a certain window in the big house where the shades were pulled down. He had turned back to say to his son-in-law:

"Now if I thought Elizabeth—"

Whereupon Mr. Robert Whittleby had interrupted him with:

"Oh, don't let that worry you. The kid's all right. I think myself it's measles, despite what the doctor says. Anyway, it's nothing at all serious. If you don't get this boat you can't make Ned's wedding, and he'd never forgive you. You've delayed quite long enough on that kid's account already." And then to the chauffeur: "All right, William!"

The powerful engine purred softly; away went the car, with Mr. Malcom Whiteside lifting his hat and waving a hand to the little group on the front porch. But as the limousine swept from the flower-bordered drive into the Avenue, his gray head was twisted about to catch a last glimpse at that window with the down-drawn shades, and again he was moving uneasily on the cushions and looking very worried.

"I hate to leave with Elizabeth ill as she is," he remarked again.

Mr. Whittleby laughed lightly. "Man, dear, that precious infant isn't made of sugar or salt. A little rise in temperature and a bit of a headache and the attendant querulousness doesn't signify anything particular. I'll warrant she'll be as good as new by to-morrow morning; and even if she isn't, she'll have quite as good care if you are on your way to England on the last boat that will get you there in time for Ned's wedding as if you were right here at home with her."

Mr. Whiteside nodded his handsome gray head.

"Of course, Bob, of course," he said quickly, but he said it as if he did not in the least believe it.

There was silence for a time, during which the streets shot past and Mr. Whiteside's face became apprehensive again. Bob Whittleby, noticing it, grinned.

"Say," he asked, "did you fuss over any of your own like this? I'll bet you anything you didn't."

Mr. Whiteside looked at his son-in-law with reproachful dignity.

"There weren't any of them like her," he said firmly. "She's so different from most children—so quaint in her ideas and her mental processes."

Whittleby's grin broadened.

"Of course," was all he said.

Robert Whittleby was a very discerning as well as a clean-cut normal sort of chap.

"Well, she *is* different," said her grandfather with some heat.

But Whittleby's only answer was to pass over a long cigar and to strike a match and hold it in obsequious readiness.

Even as the six-cylinder and ultra-expensive limousine was speeding down Beverly Avenue, Michael O'Brien, accompanied by his daughter, Mrs. Timothy Hennessey, came out of the doorway of Number 46 West Cherry Street. Michael O'Brien's big frame was almost painfully arrayed in clothes of a very obvious newness. Also for once there was a stiff collar encircling his neck. He carried a bulging suit-case and Mrs. Hennessey bore a bundle swathed in much brown paper and many, many yards of stout twine.

"We've no time to be losin'. Father," said Mrs. Hennessey, heading down West Cherry Street to the Avenue beyond, along which the elevated trains sent up their almost incessant clatter and roar. "The boat l'aves at tin sharp. We'd best be gettin' on. If there should happen to be a block, now, or aught like that—"

From somewhere above their heads came a series of thin sneezes and a child's croupy cough.

Michael O'Brien's wrinkled face suddenly twisted, as if with physical pain.

"I dunno about goin' at all, at all, Nora," said old Michael, suddenly stopping short. "wit' the wee felly in the bad shape he is. I'd never forgive meself if—"

"Aw, don't be foolish," said his daughter almost sharply. "There's nothin' to be worritin' yerself about. Don't little Timmy always sneeze and bark like that, do he but get the wee fate av him

wet be some av his own foolishness strammin' through the puddles. He'll be sufferin' no great har-rm be ut. L'ave him lay abed the day and drink the hot drinks I'll be givin' him and I'll warrant ye be to-morrer he'll be out lookin' for more av thim puddles to stram through. Come on! 'Tis a quarter past nine now!"

Michael followed her reluctantly. He looked more like a man going to his exe-

said Mrs. Hennessey almost crossly as she quickened her steps. "Sure, ye could be doin' a lot if he *was* sick and ye stayed at home, and threw up yer passage ye've paid for—and Tim givin' ye enough to go and come second cabin in-



"Come on!"
cried White
side. "Hurry!"
yelled Michael.

cution than one setting out on a long anticipated pleasure jaunt.

"He's sech a foine, quare little felly," said Michael. "If he should be tuk bad while I'm gone, I'd nivr be forgivin' mesilf."

"Ye'd chuck up yer trip because av that bit av a cold av his, I suppose,"

stead av in the steerage! Even if the lad is sick, he'll get jest as good care as if ye was here."

"Av coorse, av coorse," said old Michael, but he said it as if he did not in the least believe it.

"I don't mind yer iver worritin' so much about anny of yer own childer."

Michael shook his grizzled head.

"He's such a different wee felly from most av 'em," said he. "He's that long-headed and such quare ideas for such a wee chap!"

"Shure! He's the sivinth wonder av

the world," said his daughter with a side-long, sardonic grin at him. "But, heavin be praised, wit' all his great intelleck he's wan rare tough little kid. So don't ye worrit yerself no more. Go have yer foine trip like ye planned. Think how disappointed the Heaveys and the Shaughnesseys and the Finnigans would be if ye didn't come after all the writin' ye've done to 'em."

They had reached the elevated station on the Avenue.

"Hurry! I hear a down train comin'," said she.

Old Michael was peering down West Cherry Street, and as he peered his face was working in very evident distress.

On one of the decks of the *Slavic* is a dividing rope. Forward of the rope the second cabin passengers may disport themselves; aft of it is given over to first-class travelers.

On one side of that rope stood Michael O'Brien, taking in the hustle and bustle of approaching sailing; close by, on the other side of the rope, his elbows on the rail, stood Malcom Whiteside.

Mrs. Hennessey, having seen her father duly ensconced, had kissed him resoundingly, bidden him not worry, entrusted to him several scores of messages for several scores of people in the old country, and taken her departure.



"Up the street, whalin' sin out of a Italian kid."

Mr. Whittleby, having seen his father-in-law aboard, had warmly pressed his hand, bidden him not worry, thrust upon him a half-dozen boxes of his favorite cigars, and taken his departure.

Sailing time was rapidly nearing. Mr. Whiteside, chewing fiercely the end of the cigar in his mouth, looked longingly at the crowded wharf.

Michael O'Brien, gripping tightly the rail, also looked shoreward with troubled eyes.

A deep-toned whistle boomed out brayingly above their heads. Michael O'Brien started violently.

"I can't be goin'; I *can't*; that's all there is to it!" he muttered thickly. As he spoke he turned a distraught face towards Mr. Whiteside. He had no intention of doing so. The action was purely the involuntary one of a harassed mind. He simply looked about him at random. It was merest chance that he turned to Whiteside as he spoke.

"I beg your pardon?" said Mr. Whiteside politely, thinking he had been addressed, and the bray of the whistle drowning most of the words.

Michael O'Brien started. For the first time he seemed aware of his neighbor's presence. He coughed in embarrassment.

"I was talkin' to meself," said he, "but I was wonderin' whether or not I had the nerve to go ashore. I've a little grandson, the foineest little felly ye iver clapped eyes on. He's sick. I've been plannin' this trip for years, and if I go ashore I'll have to lose me passage, and belikes I'll nivr get another chance to go across.

But I'd give tin dollars if I had the nerve to bolt ashore right now."

He seemed to feel he was speaking to a sympathetic soul. Nor was he wrong. Malcom Whiteside took a long breath.

"My youngest son," he explained quietly, "is marrying an English girl. This is the

last boat that will get me over in time for the wedding. I have a little grand-daughter. She too was ill when I left the house this morning. And I'd give a great deal if I had the nerve to go ashore. My friend, we seem to be in the same fix. But I imagine we'd better go on. Probably we've magnified matters, anyway. No doubt both the children will be all right. Have a cigar!"

He passed over a long, black, alluring weed from his case. Old Michael took it, mumbled his thanks, bit off a good third of it and held a sputtering match to the wrong end. "All the same I wisht I had the nerve to git off," he said.

"So do I," agreed Whiteside.

At that moment a taxi came speeding down the wharf. Out of it tumbled a merry little group—an elderly man, a youngish woman and two small children, boy and girl.

There was a hurried round of embraces; then the elderly man caught up his bundle of rugs and stooped to the two little upturned faces.

"Goo'-by, granper! Goo'-by! Goo'-by!" they chattered shrilly.

"My God!" said Michael O'Brien.

Mr. Whiteside did not heed his cigar, which went plopping overside.

"Suppose—suppose I shouldn't never see little Timmy again," Michael almost whispered.

"My God!" It was Whiteside who said it this time.

The whistle was braying again. There was a great uproar on the wharf. Already they were getting the gang-planks in.

Whiteside leaped nimbly across the dividing rope and clutched Michael O'Brien by the arm.

"Come on!" he cried.

"Hurry!" yelled Michael, panting along in his wake.

"She'd grown tired of being kept abed."



Down the last gang-plank they tumbled. Whiteside hailed a taxicab.

"Where do you want to go?"

he barked at Michael. Michael gave him the address.

Whiteside turned to the chauffeur.

"Forty-six West Cherry Street, first; then take me out to

684 Beverly Avenue. Let her out! I'll stand for your fine if you're pinched!"

A six-cylinder, ultra-expensive limousine swung into West Cherry Street. It stopped at number 46. Michael O'Brien, sitting on the doorstep, looked up. Out of the limousine was thrust a very handsome gray head. The face beneath the gray hair was a trifle sheepish.

"Say," said Malcom Whiteside, "how did you find your kid?"

Michael smiled foolishly and licked his lips with his tongue.

"He were up the street, whalin' sin outa a Italian kid that had sarsed him," he confessed. "And the little girl?" he inquired politely.

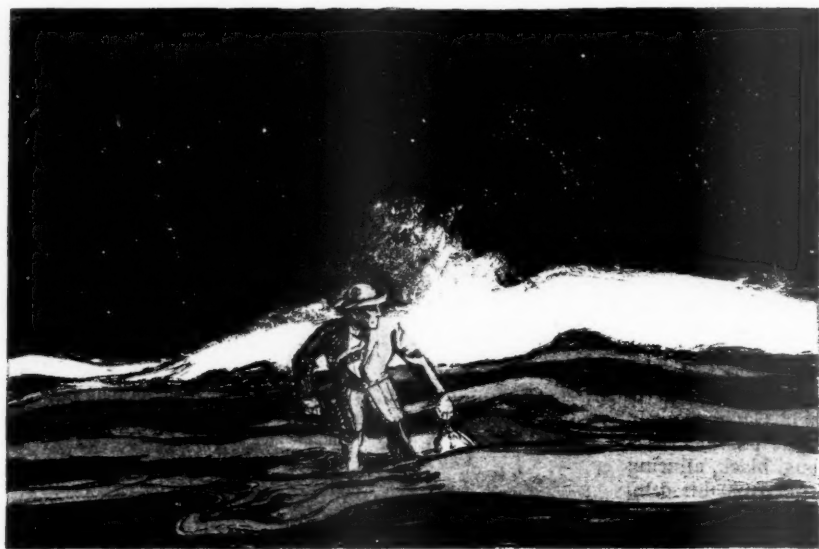
"She'd grown tired of being kept abed. She'd got up and run away. They were just bringing her back when I arrived."

There was an understanding silence. They grinned at each other.

"I think we need a bit of stimulant," Whiteside invited. "Get in!"

"I'm wid yez there, sor, though I guess it's on the two av us," said Michael O'Brien, entering the limousine.

It is something like a mile and a half from West Cherry Street to Beverly Avenue, as the crow flies. Figuring another way, the distance is even less.



THE MAN HUNT

A STORY OF ADVENTURE AND
PERIL IN THE AFRICAN WILDS

By JOHN BARNETT

Illustrated by C. B. Falls

THE darkness was falling upon that leaden sea which washes the sinister West African coast. The long, endless line of surf loomed lividly through the gray light. Its moaning crash filled the still air with sound. It lay like a gleaming sword between the gray wastes of the sea and the dark, mysterious wastes of a rotting, evil land. Upon the lonely stretch of sand a man was pacing.

Men knew him as Rodgers, the English trader. He had won a reputation for cool daring in a land where many men are brave. His lean, lank, long-armed figure was ungainly to the eye. His plain face and his lazy eyes suggested only quiet good humor. But that face and those eyes could quicken into vivid life when there was need for the extremes of courage, when other men were failing

without shame. And that awkward, fleshless frame held marvelous reserves of enduring strength.

Things were not going well with Rodgers at the moment. Little of fortune had come his way in all the wild years of his venturings in West Africa. He had fought a grim fight with that strange, dark land; he had dared disease and death in a hundred shapes, and in return she had flung him a bare living wage. There were moments when the struggle seemed hopeless even to his indomitable pluck. At such dark hours it was his habit to avoid his fellow men. This evening he had left behind him the noise and garish lights of the little Portuguese coast town, drawn by a queer longing for silence and loneliness and the salt freshness of the sea.

A man, despite his best endeavors,

had a great, hungry yearning for England at times.... That was weakness, of course, and yet.... Just to think of England, with its damp green fields and its ordered peace and its friendly faces, was at once a joy and a strange, dragging pain. Would a man ever go back? Would he ever make good, achieving his ambitions? If Rodgers knew himself at all, there could be no return for him, save with a triumph. It was a case of "carrying his shield, or upon it." He would never slink back, a failure. So he must win through, or find a grave, soon or at long last as the gods willed, somewhere in this land of devilish fascination. He laughed a little at himself. That was all right. There was nothing for a man to whine about in that. Only—the path did seem painfully long at times, and a man was occasionally childishly weak.... He squared his thin shoulders with another laugh, fixing his eyes upon the sea, and started with surprise at what he saw.

Something, a dark, blurred shape, was creeping shorewards through the blackness. It was near to that livid line of foam. If it were a boat, a small boat, Rodgers judged that its chance of making the land was scant indeed. As he hastened down to the breaking waves he strained his eyes seaward and made out a steamer's lights in the vague darkness beyond that dimly seen object. This boat, if it were a boat, might possibly have come from that steamer for some unguessable purpose.

It proved to be a boat. A minute later Rodgers heard a faint cry, and just distinguished the little craft borne high upon the white, curling crest of a giant breaker. That crest curved over and crashed down with superb, resistless might. Rodgers, knee deep in creaming water, caught sight of a helpless arm uplifted from the savage turmoil.

Rodgers splashed forward, characteristically careless of risk. Something was flung against him by a wave. He clutched blindly and held on, although carried off his feet. It was a man's collar that he held. For a struggling moment it was likely enough that two lives would be sacrificed. But a great, hungry wave defeated its own object. It flung Rodgers

and the senseless man he gripped into the shallows.

Rodgers dragged the stranger to dry sand and bent above him. His matches were wet, but the moon rose opportunely, flooding the world with a splendor of white light. And in that radiance the face of the unconscious man was mercifully revealed.

It was not a good face. Rodgers had a hard earned experience of human countenances, and his first glance prejudiced him against this flotsam of the sea. The mouth and nose were predatory; the eyes were set too closely together. The fleshy cheeks and chin suggested over-indulgence in more than one direction. But there was power and ability in the face, none the less.

"I don't like you much, somehow," Rodgers reflected as he loosened the man's collar. "But I'd rather have you on my side than against me. You haven't got that forehead and nose and jaw for nothing. Whoever gets badly left, it won't be you, I fancy. But I wonder what in blazes you're doing alone in that boat, dressed like this?"

The stranger was dressed in an exceedingly well-cut suit of blue serge. The sight of it, soaked and ruined by sea water as it was, gave Rodgers quite an absurd pang. It was long enough since he himself had worn the handiwork of a first-class tailor.

The stranger opened his eyes, spluttered and sat up.

"Where the deuce am I? What's happened? Oh, I know—I thought I was going to be drowned in that beastly surf!"

"And you jolly nearly were!" Rodgers said drily. "Have a mouthful of this." And he produced a flask.

The stranger swallowed a generous gulp.

"Thanks very much. I feel my own man again. How did I get ashore? Did you pull me out? I see that you are wet too."

"Yes, I suppose you may say that I did," Rodgers admitted carelessly.

"I'm grateful, of course. But perhaps you will have no reason to regret it. May I ask what is your name?"

The man spoke like an employer ad-

dressing a subordinate, rather than a man thanking his rescuer. Certainly his gratitude was not in the least excessive. Here was one who appeared to take all services, even the saving of his life at risk, as a matter of right. Rodgers was lazily amused and a trifle resentful.

"I can't say yet if I shall regret it or not," he drawled. "I did not exactly weigh the chances of profit when I went in after you. As for my name, it's Rodgers. What's yours?"

"Wilbraham, John Wilbraham," the other man answered. He seemed surprised by Rodgers' tone. He surveyed him curiously with his oddly cold gray eyes. Probably Rodgers, standing there in the moonlight with his thin white garments drenched and stained, did not give the impression of undue prosperity. Wilbraham fumbled in his coat and produced a pocketbook.

"You sha'n't regret it," he said with a touch of magnificence. "Here is a tangible proof of my gratitude." And he detached two ten-pound notes from a bulky roll and held them out to his rescuer.

Rodgers laughed with genuine amusement.

"I perceive that you are accustomed to pay for services rendered, Mr. Wilbraham," he said quite gently. "It is an excellent and commendable habit, but—I'm afraid I don't take tips. An absurd prejudice on my part, no doubt?"

"Well, really—I had no wish to hurt your feelings," Wilbraham remarked with some surprise and more annoyance. "I honestly thought—"

"That I shouldn't be above a tip?" Rodgers said good naturedly. "Ah, it's not always safe to judge a man by his appearance, in this part of the world at any rate. I'm sure you mean well, Mr. Wilbraham, and so I'll give you a word of valuable advice. Don't press gratuities upon everyone you meet out here. Everyone is not so—thick-skinned and patient as I. You might get badly hurt. And besides, it might not be safe to exhibit that wad of notes in all company."

"I'll remember your advice," Wilbraham said brusquely. He was frowning heavily, and Rodgers judged that he was little used to contradiction.

"That's good," Rodgers answered.

"And now, since you wish to reward my small service, I will tell you how you can do so. You can satisfy my curiosity, by telling me how you happened along here, alone in that small boat."

Wilbraham answered with some glibness. For the life of him Rodgers could not help thinking that he spoke like a man reeling off a prepared tale.

"I was the only passenger on a tramp steamer out yonder, and I had a row with the skipper, a dashed surly brute. We almost came to blows. Anyhow, I insisted that he should let me land at once." Rodgers lifted his eyebrows. The story was most distinctly thin. He had no doubt at all that something else lay behind this mysterious landing. He smiled pleasantly at Wilbraham in the moonlight, and that imperious gentleman was swift to lose his temper.

"What are you grinning at? Do you mean that you don't believe me?"

Rodgers' smile endured.

"I mean nothing. It is a most interesting affair. Only, I should recommend thinking out a more convincing story to tell to the good people in the town yonder. They are not all as simple as I."

Wilbraham's face became dangerous. He looked about him, and his hand settled in a side pocket of his coat.

"I don't know if you happen to have a pistol there, Mr. Wilbraham," Rodgers drawled pleasantly, but with a significant gesture. "But if you have, I shouldn't try to use it. I am probably at least as quick as you, and in any case there is no need for trouble. I am not in the least curious about you or your need for lying. And—I am not connected in any way with the police."

Wilbraham flushed darkly.

"Do you suggest—?"

"I suggest nothing, except that we have had enough of each other's company. There is the town, a mile away along the beach. Suppose you make for it. We each require a change of clothes. With your permission, we will not walk together, and, to relieve your natural anxiety, there is no necessity for mutual recognition if we meet again. Good night, Mr. Wilbraham!"

And he struck up the beach.

"He might have shot me in the back,"

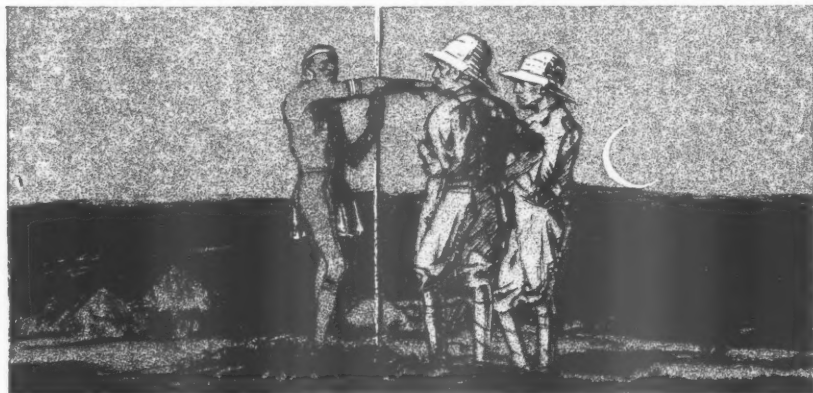
Rodgers reflected as he walked. "He seems quite a dangerous, lawless sort of person. I wonder what he's done? Well, thank the Lord, it's nothing to do with me!"

The odd business passed from his mind in a day or so, and it was three months or more before it was recalled to him in a fashion sufficiently strange.

That was the night on which he met the young Englishman, David Hallam. Rodgers, at a loose end for an hour or so, had turned into a Portuguese drinking shop not especially distinguished for

Rodgers took no sort of notice of their chatter. He sat there, lazy-eyed as ever, with a very faint smile about his lips. There might have been cotton wool in his ears for all the sign he gave of hearing. But the half-castes found another explanation of his deafness. They assumed that this lean Englishman was a timid specimen of the breed sent by the gods for their safe amusement.

So they passed from words to deeds. The tall half-caste rose and, pretending to stumble, drenched Carson with the contents of his glass. Whereat there was



The man Wilbraham, or Garnet, had headed up the river.

sober respectability. The fact that Englishmen were not markedly popular in such resorts and that their appearance occasionally led to vivid trouble may possibly have provided a further inducement for Rodgers' visit. He himself would strenuously have denied the suggestion; but is it plausible, to those acquainted with Rodgers.

The place was bright and hot with many stinking lamps, and was thronged with a motley crowd of Portuguese and half-castes. Rodgers' entrance did not pass unmarked. He ordered a drink and sat down quietly, lighting a cigar. Promptly a tall, large-boned, yellow half-caste swaggered across to the next table with two allies at his heels. They began a conversation vaguely directed at first against all Englishmen, and gradually merging into personal allusions aimed at this particular Englishman.

a roar of ugly laughter. Englishman-baiting was a somewhat rare sport. It could not often be indulged in with impunity.

Rodgers pulled out his handkerchief very coolly and wiped his face and garments. He was feeling oddly happy. He was one of those strange people to whom excitement and a measure of peril are necessities of life. He actually reveled in the feeling that he was up against long odds. Then he rose lazily to his feet—and there was a crisp smack as the back of the half-caste's head made sharp connection with the wooden floor. Rodgers' long left hand had flashed out straight and clean for the yellow man's chin. The man was "outed" cleverly, knocked senseless with that insolent, sneering smile still upon his face.

After that, there was brisk trouble. The entire dingy crowd in the cabaret

seemed to get to its feet and make for the Englishman. Rodgers laughed aloud, dealing out blows like piston strokes with his long arms. He was genuinely pleased with life at the moment. It was an undoubted fact that, in all human probability, his life would be cut short within the next three minutes, and no one knew that better than Rodgers; but of late years he had not rated very highly the value of his own existence. He was just one against a crowd, and there was charm in the fact, and that was all there was to say about it.

But suddenly the odds were lessened. Through the open door a passer-by had observed the scuffle. A fight against long odds appeared to have attraction for him also. And he chanced to be of the same race as the tall, lean man about whom that yellow-skinned crowd were raging like snarling wolves. The passer-by, with refreshingly little reflection or prudence, just clenched his fists and entered the cabaret at a run.

His headlong rush clove him a way to Rodgers' side. "I'm with you!" he panted. "Good man!" Rodgers answered. "Make for the door! It's—getting—just—a—little—ugly!" His words, which were punctuated by smashing blows, described the state of things with accuracy. Knives were out by now, and pistols. The lives of the two Englishmen hung upon the chances of a successful shot or stab. And well was it for them that they were the only cool hands present.

Shoulder to shoulder they fought a way towards the door. The air was heavy with smoke. There rang out the yelps of men winged by their own excited friends. Rodgers and the stranger were tiring fast. Every foot across that floor was a savage struggle. Ah! the door at last! They fled together into the darkness without shame.

Apparently the pursuit was not prolonged. That mongrel crowd had had enough of those two fist-fighting aliens. The fugitives pulled up when they deemed it prudent.

"I'm much obliged," Rodgers panted. "You came very opportunely."

"Don't mention it," the stranger answered between his gasps. "It was a

pure pleasure. But my room should be somewhere near here. Come up and have a drink."

In the bare, cool chamber the two surveyed each other above tumblers. Apparently each found the survey satisfactory. Rodgers' appearance has been indicated. Most men discovered an odd liking for his plain, lined face. The other man was younger and of a far sturdier build. His face, with its steady gray eyes and rather heavy jaw, suggested that he might prove a good friend or a dangerous enemy.

"I rather fancy that you saved my life," Rodgers said casually. "I don't suggest that it is worth very much, but the fact remains. That was a vicious crowd. My name is Rodgers and I am fairly well known out here. You look too annoyingly healthy to be anything but a newcomer. If I can serve you in any way I shall be honestly glad."

"My name is David Hallam," the other man answered. "You are under no sort of obligation to me, but it is quite possible that you can help me, if you will. I am a newcomer here, as you suggest, and I have come with a definite object. What I tell you is, of course, between ourselves. Have you ever indulged in man hunting, Mr. Rodgers? They say it's the most exciting sport in God's world. Well, I'm out here to hunt down a man."

Rodgers lifted his eyebrows with a certain astonishment.

"Have you heard of the big Doraldo Company smash in London?" Hallam went on.

"I read something about it in the papers," Rodgers answered. "A chap called Garnet was the leading spirit in the company, wasn't he? Didn't he abscond just before the smash?"

"He did," Hallam answered grimly. "He is the man I am hunting."

He seemed to read a question in Rodgers' eyes.

"No. I've no connection at all with the police. This is just my own private vendetta. There are a good many widows and orphans and retired colonels cursing Mr. Garnet's name just now. And I have my own reasons for wanting to get square with the gentleman. I should have

been well content to leave his punishment to the police, but they seem to have failed, as usual. The man apparently cleared out from England in a tramp steamer. The skipper was in his pay, of course. The ports were wired to, all along this coast. And the police met the steamer. But Mr. Garnet had vanished into thin air."

Rodgers made a quick movement.

"What is he like, this Mr. Garnet?" he asked.

"Oh, a fleshy sort of person with a mouth and beak that remind you of an over-fed bird of prey, and eyes like two cold, gray stones. The question is, how and where did he land?"

"I think I know," Rodgers drawled. "I fancy that his tame skipper let him make for shore alone in a boat, risking his valuable life in the surf. And, by the way, that surf jolly nearly saved you all trouble!"

"What do you mean?" Hallam cried excitedly. "Have you seen Garnet?"

"Oh, yes, I've seen him," Rodgers answered drily. "I may go so far as to say that I saved his life. I'm inclined now to wish that I'd let him drown."

And he described very briefly the incident of Mr. "Wilbraham's" landing.

"That was the man, beyond a doubt," Hallam said. "My luck's in, to light on you like this, Mr. Rodgers. Well, it only remains now to get on the trail of the beast!"

"That ought not to be very difficult," Rodgers commented. "He's probably gone up river. I should have, in his shoes. If he has, will you follow him?"

Hallam's voice was quiet enough, although his words were striking. "If he has crept into a hole on the other side of the earth, he'll find me on his heels one day," he said.

Rodgers glanced at young Hallam's grim eyes and iron jaw. "My word, I'm not sure that I should care to have you for my enemy!" he muttered. "But I think I can help you here. I'll set on foot a few inquiries about our friend. And, if he *has* gone up river, and you care for my company, I will take a hand in the chase."

"Will you, really?" Hallam cried. "Man, I shouldn't have ventured to sug-

gest it, but your help will be invaluable!"

"I can certainly put you up to a tip or two about handling the native boys, and so forth," Rodgers said. "You would be rather lost without an old hand. Yes, I'll come by all means. There's no need for gratitude. I'm rather at a loose end just now, and you've done me a good turn, and besides, I did not love your Mr. Garnet! He had the—the bad taste to offer me a tip!"

Hallam laughed.

"He would! He is always like that, I gather. He holds the pleasing theory that a man with money has no need to study other people's feelings. Well, I'm no end obliged to you, Rodgers."

Rodgers held out his hand.

"Not a bit of it. I rather fancy that we shall hit it off well together. And now I must be going. I'll look you up to-morrow, with good news, I hope."

Three days later, Rodgers and Hallam, with half a dozen native boys, were paddling fast up river.

Rodgers' inquiries had borne fruit. The man Wilbraham, or Garnet, had been unsuccessful in covering his tracks. He had headed up the river, some weeks before, apparently distrustful of the coast.

And so began a man chase that was to last for weeks and months.

Hallam from the first needed no spur; grim as a bloodhound, he gave himself and his whole strength to the pursuit; and after a while the zest of that strange hunt set fire to Rodgers' stubborn blood. The two stayed not or rested, save for food or to maintain their strength. For day after day, through glowing sunshine and blinding, choking rain-storms, they held to the chase, and its story would be worth the telling in detail did but space permit.

Right up the river they followed Garnet, gleaning word of him from lonely trading stores and scattered villages. He had not stayed for long at any spot. The restlessness of the hunted beast seemed to be in his heart. Here they would learn that he had tarried perforce for a few days, chained by a racking bout of fever; there they would hear that he had been delayed by the desertion of his boys.

He had left the river at last and had made as though to find permanent refuge in a little inland Portuguese town, but once again that restlessness had spurred him on. He seemed to be able to find no lasting dwelling place in any habitations of men. The great wild spaces untrodden by white men seemed to lure him at last with a promise of safety. And yet—he

They knew that for long he had passed beyond the tentacles of civilization, still driven by that nameless, restless fear. And now they heard that he had been taken prisoner, that he had become the slave of a native chief who had swooped westward with a raiding caravan. That raid had left a swathe of desolation where it had passed. And now it would



Hidden by thick brush they spied upon the village.

could have known nothing as yet of those two who followed.

They came to a strange, strong friendship in those long weeks of tireless pursuit, those two. Each learned to trust the other with fine completeness; each realized that his friend was brave as are few men. Both were tried to the uttermost in many ways, and did not fail, and each took a boyish pride in matching his own strength and endurance against the other man's grit. And with that spirit in their hearts men can work physical miracles, even in that nerve-racking, heart-breaking, poisonous and beautiful land of devils which men call West Africa.

For a while the scent failed; for a time the unconscious quarry seemed to have gone to ground or doubled beyond their searching. But they would admit to no failure, those two. They held on doggedly with all a vast, wild continent for their hunting ground. And in the end their stubbornness was in a measure rewarded.

Definite news came to them in a lonely inland village of the man they sought.

seem that that chief had returned with his spoil and captives to his own place.

Most men would have lost heart at the news, would have deemed that the man they hunted was lost to all eternity. But Hallam was not as are other men. It seemed to Rodgers that upon this one point his friend was a little mad. All his natural strength and energy and courage seemed to have been transformed into a granite-hard resolve to lay hands upon Garnet and drag him back to disgrace and punishment. Until that were done, Hallam would know no weariness.

"What will you do?" he said to Rodgers. "You've done enough for friendship. Lord knows. Hadn't you better turn back?"

"What will you do yourself?" Rodgers asked.

Hallam looked at him with genuine surprise.

"I? I shall go on after Garnet, of course!" he answered.

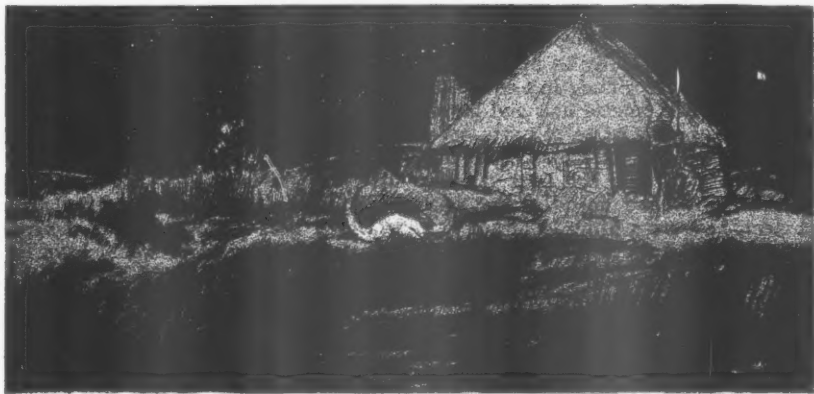
"Then I go on too," was all that Rodgers said.

And they went on. They went on in

the teeth of countless perils; they were tested by desert and forest, by wild beasts and men, by hunger and by thirst. But they went on.

Hallam was a silent man, for the most part, these days, but sometimes he would break his silence with strange words, expressive of lasting hate. "He's paying now, in part, at least! It's good

Six hours later Garnet was in their hands. Through the darkness they had crept to the hut where he slept the sleep of utter exhaustion. Two natives had paid for their own wakefulness with their lives, dying very silently, as was essential. Another desperate crawl through the sleeping village, and then the three were clear and traveling west-



Through the darkness they crept to the hut where he slept.

to think that Garnet's paying! It warms my heart. Slaves in this country have their trifling troubles, like flogging and savage labor to endure, haven't they, Rodgers?" And Rodgers would glance queerly at the tattered, haggard, fierce-eyed friend who trudged beside him.

There came those days on which they nearly died of thirst in the crossing of a wild waste of desert sand. They won through, although by very little, and one more day's march brought them to that walled village wherein Garnet, the one-time man of wealth and moving spirit in the great Doraldo fraud, toiled as a slave.

Rodgers never forgot that evening. The sun was setting in a crimson and purple huddle of glowing clouds. Hidden by thick bush they spied upon the village, noted where Garnet labored and slept, and laid their plans. At their first sight of the bowed, shrunken figure of the man whom they had chased so long, Hallam gave a queer little sound, deep down in his throat. But he spoke no word.

ward with the speed of those who know that death itself will shortly be upon their trail.

Until the dawn they held to their flight. Then, after snatching two hours of most necessary rest, they resumed their forced march all through the scorching day. They spoke little in that time. There were no explanations. Men, with torture and death at their heels, do not waste breath upon speech. Occasionally, as they toiled on under the burning sun, Garnet would stare curiously at his two rescuers, but apparently their faces conveyed nothing to him. He asked no questions; he labored on with the habit of dumb obedience acquired by a slave who knows that incautious speech may earn the lash. He seemed to take it for granted that these two ragged, travel-worn Englishmen had rescued him, their countryman, out of pure compassion. It was always his way to take things for granted, and it may well be that his brain was numbed by the physical suffering of those last few torturing weeks.

It was in the evening that explana-

tions were made. They had halted beside a sheltered pool of water, and could only trust that they had outwitted pursuit. At the least their strength was exhausted for the time. A night's rest was vitally essential before they essayed to cross the broad expanse of waterless, treeless desert waste that lay before them.

When they had eaten, Garnet spoke, almost for the first time. In the six months since Rodgers had seen him in the moonlight upon the coast, the man had changed dreadfully in appearance. The skin of his face hung in loose folds and creases. His tangled hair and beard were a dirty, patchy white. His eyes, once cold and arrogant, held something of the look of a dog that has been cruelly thrashed, often and unjustly. For sole garment, he wore a filthy length of native cloth, and upon his back and shoulders were grimly significant weals and scars. The lot of a white-skinned slave in the hands of a native chief is indeed no bed of roses. The man had aged years, and yet—there was something strong and unconquerable about him still. Already, with each hour of freedom, those steely eyes were regaining something of their old defiant confidence.

"I have to thank you two men," he said. "God knows why you've risked your lives to drag me out of that place."

And then Hallam spoke. His eyes rested upon Garnet with the serene triumph of a man who has achieved after long endeavor. "I'm going to tell you why, Mr. Garnet," he said.

Garnet shrank from the sound of the name.

"My name is Wilbraham!" he cried hoarsely.

"Excuse me; your name is Garnet. You were responsible for the Doraldo Company. I have good cause to know you and your responsibilities. I have never spoken to you before, but I know you very well, changed as you are. There are thousands of people in England, Mr. Garnet, who think of you often. Do you ever spare a thought to them—the thousands whom you have ruined?"

Garnet had recovered from the first shock. His face had regained its haggard calm. The man had strength.

"I admit nothing," he said. "Assuming

that I were Garnet, what do you propose to do?"

Hallam laughed coldly. Rodgers was watching the two men closely. They made a strange picture, the accused and accuser, in their tatters, with the tangled forest behind and the great yellow waste of sand gleaming before them under the setting sun.

"You are wise to make no admissions. But everything will come out in London in due course. What am I going to do? I am going to take you back to London to stand your trial. I am going to *make you pay*! You have broken a few hearts and spoiled a few lives by your thieving. I am going to make it my business to see that your life is spoiled. That is why I have followed you for so long, and that is why I have freed you from slavery. Some men in my place would have let you remain a slave, would have judged it the keener punishment. I think otherwise, quite apart from the chances of your effecting an escape. If I know anything of you, Mr. Garnet, public disgrace in London, the scene of your former triumphs, and some few years of convict life, will be sharper torture for you than the unrefined brutalities of your late master."

The cold hate in his voice seemed to make even Garnet wince a trifle.

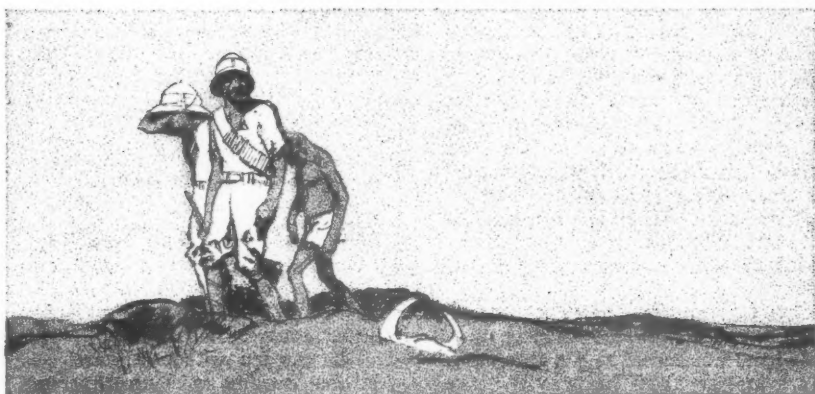
"You are bitter," he said. "But I do not even know your name. And I do not remember your face."

"My name is Hallam. You would not know it. But I was one of the many dupes whom your clever lies deceived. I put all that I had into the Doraldo. I lost every penny, of course, with thousands of others. That in itself was no great matter, perhaps. But there was some one whom I hoped to marry. I lost her too... And I made up my mind that you should pay. When the police failed, I took a hand in the game."

"I see," Garnet said quietly. "You are a man of rather unusual power, Mr. Hallam. It was perhaps an ill day for me when you invested in the Doraldo. And how do you propose to drag me back to England against my will?"

Hallam answered quietly and with entire simplicity.

"You are unarmed and I am armed,"



For two days they wandered.

he said. "You have your choice of coming or staying."

Garnet laughed as though genuinely amused.

"I see, to die or to go! To be or not to be! Well, I have a prejudice against a violent death, and you, Mr. Hallam, are one of those one-idea-ed people who get their own way. I admit you have a grievance. And yet—if those fools at home had not forced my hand, the Doraldo must have done well. It was only time that I wanted. There may have been one or two little irregularities, of course, but I could have pulled things through. As it was, the Doraldo went down: the bubble burst, and, after various adventures, I and one of my investors meet in the heart of West Africa! It is a bizarre world. And you, sir— did you also hope to make an honest hundred per cent out of the Doraldo and me?"

It was Rodgers to whom he had turned.

"No," that gentleman drawled. "I'm only here as Hallam's pal. You haven't done me out of a penny. In fact, you once offered me quite a handsome tip of twenty pounds! Don't you remember, by the sea at night, six months ago?"

Garnet stared and remembrance came to him.

"Of course!" he said. "I was in two minds—"

"About potting me," Rodgers said with a smile. "Well, Mr. Garnet, I bear

no malice, but you may be interested to hear that if you had done so you would probably not be in your present position. It was I who put Hallam upon your trail."

Garnet smiled with perfect good temper.

"We have most of us cause to regret certain things that we have left undone!" he said. "But fate has probably decided all the trifles that have brought us three together rather oddly. A man at my time of life generally comes to believe in fate. And now, with your permission, I am a little weary and should be glad to sleep."

In the dawn they began the crossing of the desert, carrying with them what water they might. And now with swift-misfortune overtook them. They lost their bearings; one of the water skins leaked; the sun and the clogging sand sapped their strength. For two days they wandered, with death drawing ever nearer. What little water they had left they must husband rigidly. They staggered almost blindly on, with parching throats and throbbing eye-balls. It may be said that each man of that strange trio bore himself with courage under prolonged torment. Garnet, physically the weakest of the three, forced himself by sheer will power to be no drag upon his captors. He reeled on in grim silence, with no word of complaint.

On the evening of the second day

they halted from sheer weakness.

The little store of water was examined, and to each man was doled a bare mouthful. They spoke together with cracking lips of their chances of life. And somehow they spoke, all three, as comrades might speak. It was as if they had forgotten for a little while all trifles, standing as they did in the very shadow of death. And this man Garnet had proved himself brave and strong to endure.

Then they lay down and slept, scarcely knowing if they would wake again.

Rodgers was roused in the gray dawn by a hoarse cry from Hallam. "Where's Garnet? He's—he's vanished!"

Rodgers sat up, rubbing his swollen eyes, and a grubby piece of paper fluttered from his breast. There was writ-

ing upon it, scrawled with a burnt stick, and they read it and knew that it was Garnet's last word in life.

*The water may last for two, when it
won't for three. Anyway, you men are
better worth the chance. And I don't
fancy the thought of that trial.*

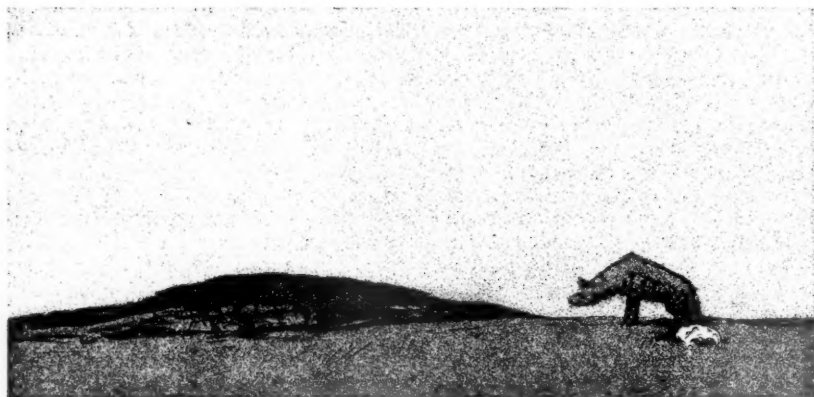
J. G.

The two who were left sat for a while, thinking of the man who had staggered out to a death by thirst.

"God knows, we're most of us queer mixtures," Rodgers said at last.

Hallam nodded without speech.

And that evening two outworn, stumbling men fought their way clear of that hellish waste of sand, lured on by the cool green of trees, and fell headlong upon the bank of a little stream.





THE LOVE
STORY OF
A DIFFIDENT
YOUNG MAN

A BUNCH OF VIOLETS

By JAMES VALE DOWNIE

Author of "The Frowardness of Fripley," etc.

Illustrated by Grant T. Reynard

THERE are always tiresome people for whom it is not enough to say, "Once there was a green, warm meadow, where thousands of violets grew, in the corner of a rotting rail fence." You must tell *why* the violets grew there and who built the fence. Well, doubtless, one particular bunch of those violets grew for the express purpose of helping young Mr. Herbert Thorn out of a very grave difficulty. As to who built the rail fence, that we do not know.

Mr. Thorn's difficulty arose from the fact that, as persons of experience all agree, it is a comparatively easy matter to resolve to tell a girl you love her, but an entirely different proposition actually to go and tell her. Mr. Thorn concluded, and rightly, after much painful cogitation, that the simplest and easiest method

of expressing his feeling would be to take her a bunch of her favorite flowers, which, in the case of Bonita Baring, happened to be violets.

Six weeks ago, he had reasoned it out much as follows: "Am I, then, in love with Bonita Baring? I am, mightily. She means all and all to me. If I had known, when I first met her, that she was the daughter of the richest man in the state, I shouldn't have allowed it to happen. At least I shouldn't have jumped into the frying pan of my own volition; but, since the thing is an accomplished fact, which intimately concerns her, I must inform her of it at once. . . . It cannot cause her any regret, since she scarcely knows me, while, on the other hand, if I know anything of human nature, it ought to give her actual pleasure. Who am I to deprive a good little girl of the ancient and inalienable prerogative of rejoicing

gently over the tribulation she has visited upon even so inconspicuous a member of the inimical sex? Still, I wish she weren't quite so lovable." At this point Thorn was apt to fill his pipe and speculate fatuously, for an hour, on how much easier it would be to approach Bonita if her beauty were not quite so unique and overpowering.

He had naturally been putting the thing off until to-morrow for six weeks; now the to-morrows were all gone, and it had to be done to-day; for Mr. Thorn was leaving that night, with a party of other scientists, for South America, thence to observe some unusual aspects of the movements of certain planetary bodies. He would be gone six months and, by then, she probably would have forgotten his very existence, unless he spoke now.

So much for the *raison d'être* of Thorn's bunch of violets. They were very beautiful and fresh and their long stems were wrapped in purple foil. He had bought them of a florist in Fountain Square, and he was now on his way out fashionable North Avenue toward the home of his beloved. He had attired himself with great care in a dark gray suit, with a gray felt hat to match. He was young, good looking, and gave evidence of possessing at least average intelligence. He had clear blue eyes and a well-formed, good humored mouth. Fashion permitted him the slight embellishment of a very short mustache.

Thorn was, as has been stated, a proper-seeming, well-favored young man; but he had only two hands. It was impracticable to put his walking stick in his pocket, and he had not sufficient agility to lift his hat with his toe; so, when he saw Miss Baring, he dropped the bunch of violets on the pavement and raised his hat with his left.

That he did not sacrifice the cane, instead of the bouquet, merely indicated Thorn's perturbation. If he had been allowed a few moments to think it over, undoubtedly he would have preferred to retain the flowers, fling the stick on a neighboring lawn, and lift his hat with his *right* hand. It was characteristic of Bonita Baring, however, that she never

allowed anybody "a few minutes to think it over."

When Mr. Thorn beheld her she was climbing into a high-power roadster, at the curb in front of the Baring mansion, the roadster being already occupied by an impatient youth in an umbelliferous plaid cap. A highly spirited and excitable six-cylinder engine rumbled under the roadster's hood.

"Good afternoon," said Thorn, in dismay. It had somehow not occurred to him that he could miss seeing her on this particular day.

The six-cylinder motor was making such a noise that there was no chance of Mr. Thorn being heard. He was in despair. He began to berate himself for a craven-hearted fool—this because he had not come a month ago. For three weeks he had positively avoided her, out of pure cowardice. Now she might not notice him at all. Ah, the gods were with him; she looked up.

"Good afternoon, Miss Baring," said Thorn once more, and raised his hat.

Thorn saw her cheek color slightly. Then the gentlest and most appealing pair of brown eyes in the world looked straight through him as if he had been a paling fence.

He stared after the machine until it had disappeared down the Avenue. Some minutes later he became aware of a little girl in a short blue dress, not too clean as to her face—she had evidently been eating licorice—but radiating sympathy. She had probably been concealed behind the nearest shade tree.

"You dropped your flowers, Mister," she said, coming closer.

"So I did," replied Thorn, and picked up his bouquet.

"Aint it fierce to be turned down?"

Thorn flushed slightly.

"Phalaris, his brazen bull, had nothing on the frying-pan of unrequited affection," he conceded.

"Was them flowers for her?"

"They was."

"What you goin' to do with 'em, now?"

"I—I don't know. What would you suggest?"

The little girl leaned over to one side until her tangled curls half covered her



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He stared after the machine until it had disappeared.

face. One bright eye—the eye of an opportunist, if ever he had met one—shone forth from the covert with a suggestive gleam.

Thorn smiled.

"What is your name?" he inquired.

"Metterbain."

"I am pleased to meet you, Meta. My name is Thorn. It shall never be said that I gave flowers to strange young ladies. Would you like to have them?"

Meta Bain nodded and giggled. She took the bouquet, danced across the pavement, by way of expressing her appreciation, and then took to her heels. She ran as if she feared Thorn would change his mind. Having put a couple of blocks between herself and the disappointed lover, she began to seek Miss Betsy Spangler, a young friend who ought to

be somewhere about at that time of day, and whose assistance she now required. The idea had come to her at the moment the gentleman had told her she could have the bouquet.

It is a great game. You need one partner. You each take an equal number of violets. You select a violet with a thick, stout stem, and your opponent does the same. Then for the fray! You hook the two flowers together and pull.

One is decapitated. The vanquished combatant selects another violet and advances anew to the conflict. In the course of an afternoon quite a pile of stemless blossoms may be accumulated, and the one who has beheaded

the greater number is adjudged the victor.

Such was the entrancing game that suggested itself to Meta Bain; but, alas, Betsy Spangler was not to be found.

Turning into an alley, where the two had often foraged, she ran into a boy of the name of Haggarty, who sold newspapers in the forenoon and pursued a life of indolence for the remainder of the day.

"What's them?" he inquired sharply.

"Vi'lets," said the girl.

"Huh—what'll you take for 'em?"

"What'll you gimme?"

Mr. Haggarty considered. It was plain that the girl did not fully realize the nature and value of her find. That, however, was none of his look-out. With an air of indifference he said:

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"Give you a stick of chewing gum. It's never been used, neither."

"Lemme see it."

The boy pulled a handful of miscellaneous articles from his trousers pockets and segregated a piece of chewing gum in a rather dirty pink wrapper. He held it out to the girl, who grabbed it and poked the bouquet into his hand.

Haggerty turned quickly back into the alley, ran about half a block and climbed over a board fence into the back yard of a little four-room cottage. A woman was hanging out clothes on a wash line. He sneaked down toward the house, behind a string of wet tablecloths, unobserved, and got around to the front.

Seated on the front steps, he carefully loosened the purple tin-foil and spread it out, with a sigh, on his knee. The violets he threw on the ground.

Tom Haggerty was still gloating over his treasure—he had not yet determined what glorious use he should put it to—when the knob of the front door turned ineffectually. Tom started. Instinctively he thrust the purple foil into the concealment of his bosom as the door opened to give egress to Alberta Haggerty, aged ten, and Bubbles Haggerty, aged five. Nothing is more certain than that Bubbles Haggerty, if his wide and solemn gaze had ever alighted on the purple foil, would have cried himself sick to obtain possession of it. Tom, seeking seclusion, shuffled toward the corner of the house.

"Ma wants you, Tom," called the girl, and turned to help her brother down the steps. When he was down on the walk, Bubbles' eye caught the flowers and he stopped to pick them up.

"Why, where'd you get the vi'lets?" inquired Alberta.

"Foun' 'em," said Bubbles.

Clutching the bouquet in one hand and giving Alberta the other, he set off for his afternoon walk.

They had covered about four blocks when they came across three strolling musicians. One played a harp. He looked like a bandit. Another played a flute. He was fat and inoffensive. A third played a violin. He was young and foreign looking, and he smiled at Bubbles.

When the musicians had played for

about a quarter of an hour the young fellow with the violin took his cap and went around among the listeners gathered along the curb. He got a penny or two here and there, but not much silver. When he came to Alberta she shook her head regretfully, for she had no money. Bubbles, however, put his bunch of violets in the hat.

The harpist swore a foreign oath, whereat the violinist turned and spoke rather sharply to him, in a strange language. Then he thanked Bubbles, smiling again, and put the violets inside the case with his violin. The bunch was too big to fasten in his button-hole.

The three players moved down the street. At the first corner all three got on a trolley car which bore them toward the center of the city. The harpist bemoaned his fate; the flutist puffed, for he was always out of breath; but the handsome violinist was sadly silent. It had been a poor day for them.

When they separated, Friedrich Wilhausen, the violinist, climbed to a back room at the top of a five-story tenement. He was greeted by a pretty, dark-eyed girl of fifteen. Laying his instrument case on the table he sank into a chair.

He sighed—then he smiled and opened the case.

"That is all, to-day," he said, in German. "Perhaps you can make a salad of it, my dear sister. Otherwise I do not know what we shall eat. We took less than a dollar, all day, and I gave my share to Vilkoﬀ; he was so weary from carrying the harp."

"*Ach, die schöne Veilchen!*" cried the girl.

"Do you think they will do for a salad?"

"Hardly; I will put them in a glass of water. Friedel, and you shall see how they will perfume the room. Doesn't it make you happier and cooler just to look at them? It has been so warm this afternoon."

Friedrich sat with his head on his hands, the picture of dejection. In truth the sister was almost as disheartened as he; but she chose not to exhibit her discouragement. There had been tears in her eyes, as she put the violets in the glass, but she had wiped them away, secretly,

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and held the bouquet to her face for a moment, before she smilingly set it on the bare table.

In a world which finds a place for violets there must be room for a young violinist, she thought; and that seems reasonable enough.

"I wish that you might have a regular position," she sighed. "Even though the wages were small, they would be always the same and one would know what to expect. Sometimes the people are so generous and, sometimes, they are just—donkeys."

"Perhaps, Annschen, it is simply that I cannot play well enough."

"That is nonsense, Friedel. You are the best violinist in this town."

"If I were, I should be playing for Herr Lewenstein. He has six or seven orchestras, at hotels and theatres, and he furnishes music for all important assemblages."

"Then why do you not ask Master Lewenstein to give you a place?"

"I?"

"Yes, thou."

"I had never thought of it."

He was going to say that he had not the courage to approach the great music master; but at this moment he chanced to glance up at Annschen and, from the girl, his gaze wandered to the flowers on the table. How pretty she was—so fresh and winsome, like the violets are in pasture corners, damp with morning dew. Surely God did not intend Annschen to live forever in a dingy tenement. How quickly her cheeks would lose their bloom and her soul its sweet purity. It came to Friedel, as something he had always known, but had, oddly enough, never thought of before, that he must win success and wealth, not for his own sake, but for Annschen's.

"Since I have thought of it now, dear Sister, I will do so at once." He got up with determination, put the violin case under his arm and took his cap.

"Where does one find Herr Lewenstein?"

"He himself plays with an orchestra at the great hotel on Lamartine Lake. It is ten miles from the city and one goes there on the trolley, if one has not an automobile."

"But you must wait until I make you a cup of tea."

"There is not time, *Liebchen*. I must be there by six o'clock."

"At least you shall wear some of the pretty flowers in your button-hole. It is a good omen that they were given to you. Wait."

She ran to the table and divided the bunch of violets. Part of them she put back in the cracked tumbler; the others she tied carefully with a bit of thread and pinned them on the lapel of his coat.

"If he will but give me a chance to play!" said the lad, with determination.

In the "palm room" of the Lamartine Hotel a hundred tables glimmered underneath rose-shaded lights. Here the élite of the city mingled with summer residents of the hotel, dining gaily, and probably, uncommonly well; the Lamartine's chef had a national reputation. At one side of the billiard room, upon a raised platform, was Mr. Lewenstein's orchestra. The master himself sat in a chair beside the leader's dais; they had just completed the second number of the program.

A youth in a velvet coat, with an ebony violin case under his arm, marched into the lobby of the hotel, turned into the "palm room" and, disregarding the officious head waiter, made his way straight to the orchestra. His odd clothes and handsome face attracted the attention of a score of diners. They saw him mount the platform and bow to the gray-haired Meister, who smiled, listened attentively, and slowly shook his head.

Miss Bonita Baring sat at a table by a window that overlooked the lake, and ate of a fruit salad. Opposite her was the young man of the plaid cap—he had laid it aside for the time being—smoking a cigarette. The waiter addressed him as Mr. Caldwell, which would seem to indicate that he was rather well known about this establishment, and the girl called him "Eddie." It is not probable that he would have taken his eyes from Bonita's face long enough to observe the entrance of the amateur musician, had her attention not first been attracted, not only from her salad, but also from the vastly interesting story he was telling.

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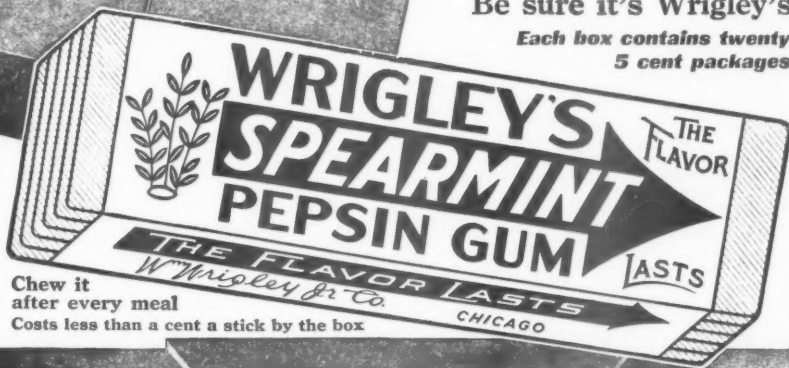
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"The youngster is looking for a job," opined Caldwell, following her glance. "He's certainly got nerve to come in here."

"I do hope he gets it," said Bonita, laying down her fork and displaying a curious concern.

"Not likely. Watch the head waiter; he's going to chuck the Hungarian raspberry out on his neck, I'll bet a dollar."

"Oh, I hope not. I wish Mr. Lewenstein would let him play," said the girl, applauding softly with her ungloved hands.

"There comes Saddler now. You might ask him to use his influence with old Lewenstein," suggested the young man. "He owns the place."

A red faced, elderly gentleman in a dress-suit, who had just come in and was wandering about rather aimlessly, paused at a near-by table. Bonita's escort caught his eye and beckoned; he came at once.

"Good evening, Eddie," said the red-faced man affably, "what can I do for you?"

"It's a long story," said Caldwell. "To begin with, I want to do you the favor of introducing you to my cousin, Miss Baring. Bonita, this is Mr. Saddler, proprietor of the Lamartine."

"Charmed," avowed Mr. Saddler. Bonita smiled.

"My cousin," explained the young man, "has an idea she would like to hear that tramp musician fiddle some—the fellow who came in a few minutes ago and is now trying vainly to make an impression on the adamant heart of your orchestra leader."

"What tramp musician?" inquired Saddler with a start.

Eddie pointed toward the orchestra. An expression of displeasure passed over the proprietor's face.

"Do please let him play," begged Bonita in her prettiest manner. The appeal was not to be denied. If she had asked Mr. Saddler to turn a handspring over their table he probably would have been unable to refuse.

"Certainly, if you wish it," he acceded. "We have many applications of this sort, but they don't often wander into the main dining-room. I will tell Mr. Lewenstein."

He was rewarded with a smile, and hurried off. Bonita and her friend saw him speak to the leader, who had just dismissed Friedel. The badly frightened head waiter was about to lead the youth from the room. After a discussion between the music master and the proprietor, however, the air of incredulity on the former's face gave place to one of resignation, and he spoke briefly to the pianist, who motioned the boy to a portfolio of music.

The boy turned over several sheets nervously, his heart beating wildly, his eyes a-blur. What if he should fail? Most of the music was unfamiliar; it looked difficult. Then he came upon Grieg's "Einer Primula Veris."

It was a good omen. God must have put that piece in the portfolio, for it was one he knew and loved: a song of the sunny, wind-swept uplands and warm, fragrant meadows, of flowery nooks and bubbling, wandering streams, of a very beautiful and wholly unattainable country of dreams. As he played, he saw Ann-schen bending over the violets in the chipped tumbler and his eyes burned with affection.

"It is odd, but I haf nefer heard that piece before," said the Meister.

"We have played it three times a week, since a year," replied the pianist.

"I haf nefer heard it before," reaffirmed the Meister, turning to offer Friedel his hand.

The audience applauded uproariously. The proprietor went to the rostrum to congratulate the young musician.

"I guess he gets his job," said Caldwell. "Mr. Saddler is shaking hands with him now. Why, what's wrong, Nita?"

"Nothing," laughed the girl, dabbing at her cheek with a handkerchief. "Only music like that makes me think of all the mean things I ever did in my life."

"Which isn't very many."

"It is. I've done *thousands* of mean things—and—and it's always my best friends that suffer. Why just this evening—"

"So lately?"

"I ran off from Herbert Thorn."

"Shucks—he knows I'm your cousin and harmless."

"Yes—but I *cut* him; didn't you see?"



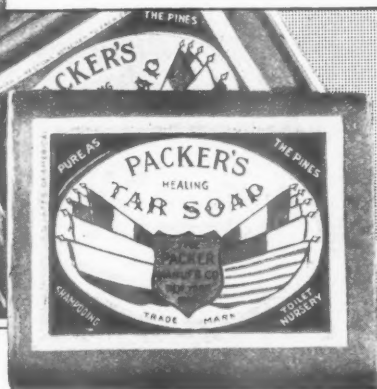
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I was furiously angry with him, for he has just literally hidden from me, for weeks; but that's no excuse. He's just the kind of a fellow that would feel terribly hurt and nobody would ever find it out. To-morrow I'm going to get down on my knees and ask his pardon."

"Happy Thorn! Something tells me he wouldn't be hard to mollify. But you'll be saved the necessity of such humiliation, Bonita, for he won't be here to-morrow. He's leaving to-night for South America."

Bonita stared at her companion with shining, incredulous eyes. At last she said—

"Please show me where the telephones are, Ed."

It took some time to get the number she asked for, and it was perhaps fifteen minutes later that Bonita came out of the telephone booth. Caldwell joined her in the lobby, and together they strolled out upon the veranda. Near the entrance of the hotel they passed the proprietor and the now effusively joyous young musician.

"Don't thank me," growled Saddler with some impatience. "I would have passed you up. There goes the young lady who wanted to hear you play."

Friedel caught the two on the steps outside. He wrung the hand of the young man in the plaid cap—he now had it on once more—uttering many heartfelt German blessings. He kissed Bonita's fingers and narrowly escaped being thrown from the boat-landing for his audacity. It was the beautiful lady who interceded once more in his behalf.

"Only tell me what can I say, what can I do," he pleaded, "to make you know how happy and grateful you have made one poor fiddler?"

"It was enough that you played for us," said the girl graciously.

"No, no, no! It is only a privilege, an inspiration, to play for one so good and beautiful and kind. Wait, you must take these. My sister pinned them to my coat and it would make her so happy to know that you let me give them to you."

Friedel plucked the violets from his buttonhole and handed them to Bonita. She seemed hesitant, but he would not be denied:

"They are faded, yes, and no longer so pretty; but *ach*, they are not common *Veilchen*! *Nein*. They have been blessed of God and the fairies. They will bring you great fortune and happiness. Only take them and you shall see."

"I love violets," confessed Bonita, "even when they are wilted. I thank you for them."

Thirty minutes later a six-cylinder roadster struck into the North Avenue Boulevard at a speed which the law rigidly condemned. The car drew up soon thereafter, in front of the Baring residence, with a squeak, and Bonita stepped out.

"Good night, girly," said the driver, "and I hope you'll like S. A."

"I'm not going to South America, Ed. Don't talk nonsense. Thank you for the dinner and the ride."

"H'm," said the young man, who was lighting a cigarette. He mumbled something else, as he released his engine. It sounded like "Happy Thorn!"

Bonita took her hat and cloak into the house, glancing at the tall clock in the hall, as she put them on the rack. Then she came out again and found a wicker chair in a vine-shadowed corner of the veranda. When Thorn arrived, fifteen minutes later, she met him half-way down the steps.

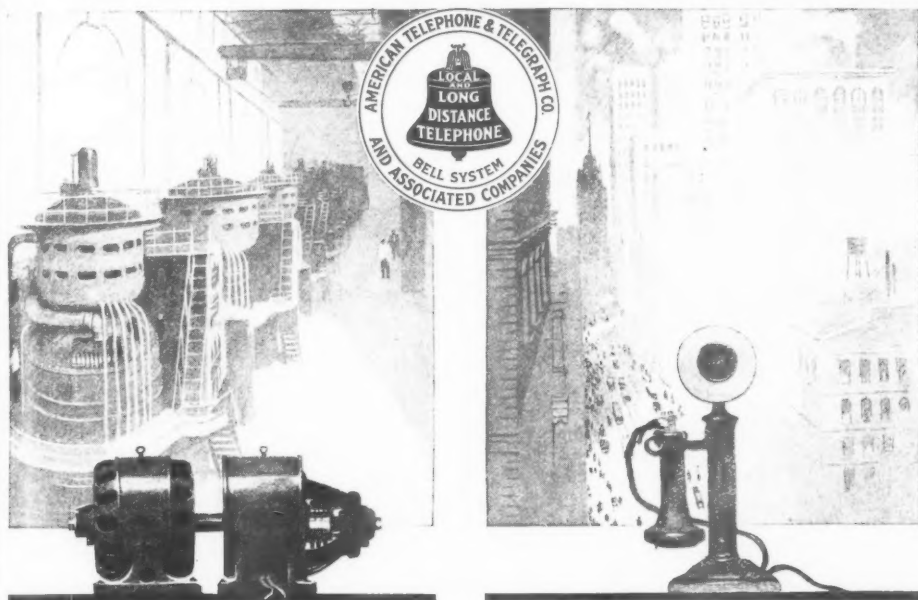
"Good evening, Miss Baring," he said. "I am Herbert Thorn—you telephoned me an hour ago that you would like to have me call to-night."

"Yes. Don't be any more sarcastic than you have to be, Mr. Thorn. I am very humbly sorry for cutting you this afternoon. Of course, I know you, even when I see you at night."

"I—I thought perhaps you did not recognize me, but that your friend had mentioned my name—*after* you had got by."

"No. I did it deliberately, because I wanted to. I was trying to punish you for staying away so long. Then, at La-martine Lake, Cousin Edward told me you were leaving town to-night, to be gone a long time. I couldn't bear to let you go that way; so I called you up."

"You are most kind. And I am very glad you did. It will help to fill in what seemed likely to be a very dreary hour



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or two. My steamer trunk is at the station. My bag is packed and my friend, Bannister, who has rooms next to mine, will take it to the train when he goes."

He looked at his watch by moonlight. Then Bonita led the way to the end of the veranda, where comfortable cane chairs were disposed about a rug. She sat in a hammock. Thorn sank into a chair and lighted a cigarette, partly to compose his mind and partly, no doubt, because he could find nothing to say. His courage of the afternoon had completely evaporated. Besides, he was totally unarmed—it had been too late to go to the florist's for another bunch of violets.

A streak of moonlight got through the vines, somehow, and touched the side of her face and neck. The tip of a white slipper also got into the spot-light. The young man set his teeth hard.

Why in the name of common sense had he ever thought of going to South America? It was to be, forsooth, a pleasure jaunt! What pleasure could possibly be found in a six months' absence from Croyland, where he would, at least, have



"I wish Mr Lewenstein would let him play," said the girl.

opportunity, once in a while, to look from afar on Bonita? Why not telephone Bannister that he had taken the measles and would have to pass it up?

But, no! South America was, on second thought (he had now got to his third cigarette), just the place for him. To stay at home would only mean to get

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deeper and deeper in the toils. Six months in the Andes might cure him, might take the crazy kink out of his brain and the hopeless ache out of his heart. He'd *got* to go, now. He could never stand it, after this, to hang around with-in arm's reach of everything in the world that he couldn't have.

Neither had spoken for ten minutes. Finally Bonita broke the silence.

"South America is such an unhealthy place, isn't it?"

"In spots—yes, I believe it is," conceded Thorn.

"They have a great many tarantulas down there, do they not?"

"I have heard that those insects are fairly plentiful in some places," replied Thorn glumly.

"Ugh! and *snakes*."

"It is said that the jungles are rather hickly populated with poisonous reptiles. It happens, however, that I do not intend to frequent any jungles."

"You mustn't go near them. Oh, I'm afraid you'll get yellow fever or some other terrible disease. Don't you want me to give you a charm, Mr. Thorn, that will keep away the evil spirits?"

It is possible that Miss Baring had been leading up to this proposition of the charm. If so, Thorn's reception of the idea was all that could be desired.

"It is exactly the thing I need," he admitted. "Have you an amulet that you can lend me?"

Bonita fumbled at her girdle and presently handed Thorn a small and draggled bunch of purple flowers.

"They are wilted, I'm afraid, but they have been charmed by the fairies. Really they have. Press them in your Bible and keep them with you everywhere. They may, perhaps, help a little to make you remember some of your friends at home."

"I'm afraid that is not exactly the sort of a charm I particularly need," sighed Thorn, on whom the flowers, now that he had them in his hands, were having a peculiar effect. "Now, if you could give me a talisman that would help me to forget—but, speaking of violets, do you know, Bonita—Miss Baring, that I was coming to see you this afternoon on a rather unusual errand? I was bringing you just such a bouquet as this."

"Were you? If I had only noticed the flowers—"

"I dropped them when I lifted my hat. A rather dirty little girl came by and asked me for them. I was unable to resist her—she had a most insidious smile."

"You are trying to make me sorrier for what I did, aren't you? Well, you can't."

"No, I'm trying to explain something that seemed hard to account for. I was going to do a most ridiculous and unwarrantable thing this afternoon; somehow the violets make it seem more excusable. I had entirely given up the idea, but perhaps—"

"I hope you're not going to do anything unwarrantable and ridiculous," said Bonita with admirable gravity.

"I—I fear I am," he faltered. "You see, I have excused the thing to myself on the grounds that, if it *is* ridiculous, it may therefore *amuse* you, which would be an admissible, if not actually a desirable, end."

"Nobody could object to being amused," conceded Bonita.

"I have been telling myself that. It's funny, isn't it, how differently things appear at noon and at midnight? To-morrow morning I shall wonder how I could tell you all these things; but the fact is, Miss Baring, I have philosophized a good bit about girls, lately, and I think I have arrived at some pretty sound theories."

"Such as what?"

"Well, one of them is that all girls like to be admired. They do, do they not?"

"By the right kind of people, yes. It's vanity, I suppose; but men like it too, don't they?"

"I don't know," said Thorn, somewhat puzzled. "Perhaps they do—some of them. I've never thought much about it. You see I have been investigating the other sex."

If Bonita was diverted by this disclosure she at least gave no audible sign.

"What other truths have you discovered?"

"It seems a natural corollary of the first proposition that all girls should desire to be loved. I mean that it must give



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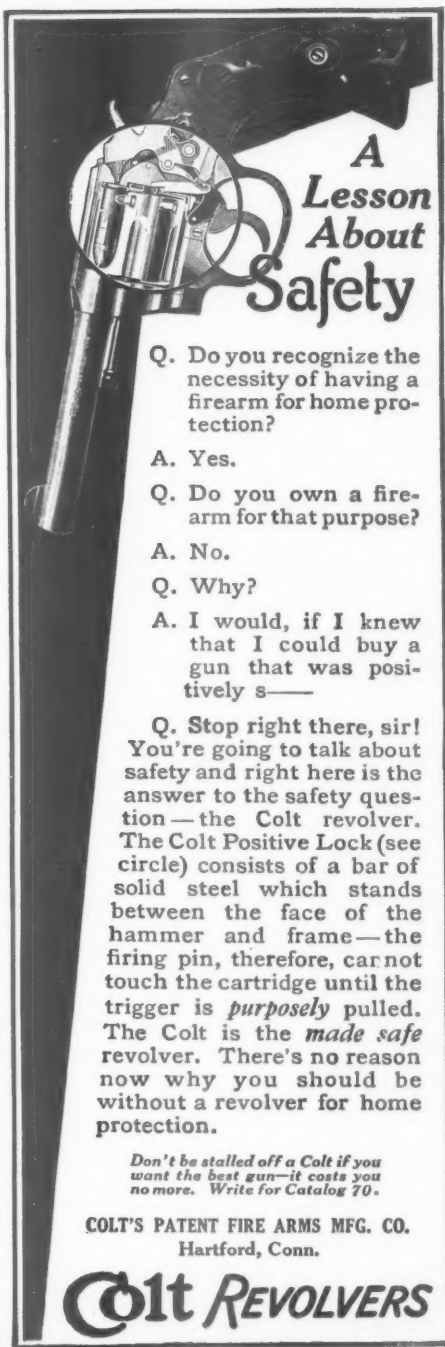


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pleasure to a girl to know that she is able to inspire a tender sentiment in most of the men she meets."

"It would depend on who the girl is," said Bonita, "and the kind of men who felt that way toward her."

"We'll presuppose a nice girl and a decent lot of fellows, of course," elaborated Thorn.

"Must there be a *lot* of them?"

"Well, yes—you see that's just the point. The girl might not know much about a fellow. He's just a friend—one of the crowd, but a decent, clean chap, perhaps. She couldn't care a lot for him, because she hardly knows him; but what I mean is, wouldn't it give her pleasure just to know that that fellow, and a lot more like him, loved her—in a distant way, of course?"

"No, I don't think it would," replied Bonita decisively. "If she were the right sort, and didn't happen to love him in return, she would be much pained to think that he loved her."

Thorn became visibly worried.

"But, Miss Baring, I don't think you really understand my proposition. I am presupposing a girl who is unusually attractive, a raving beauty, in fact—not of the austere, queenly description, but of that appealing, girlish type—a girl that half the fellows in town are in love with and would be ashamed to admit it if they weren't. Surely a girl like that hasn't time to be sorry for all the conquests she makes, innocently and perhaps all unintentionally."

"What she doesn't know may not hurt her," said Bonita. She seemed to have very clearly defined opinions on the matter. "But I detest a coquette!"

"Dear me," sighed the young scientist. "I'm afraid I've put my foot in it. I guess I don't know much about girls after all."

"It was a natural mistake," Bonita assured him, virtuously. "No doubt there are girls like that." Her manner made it very clear to him that she herself wanted no promiscuous adoration.

"Of course you have guessed that I was thinking of you," said Thorn sorrowfully. "And now I suppose you will believe that I thought you a coquette, which will deeply offend you. Moreover,

you know, now, that I love you, and that will cause you painful regret. Lord, I've made a mess of it!"

There was a long silence in the shadow of the porch vine. The sound that finally relieved the tension for Thorn was a rather peculiar one, probably indicative of mirth. A child with its mouth full of gingerbread laughs through its nose, in a manner expressive, not so much of gaiety, as of supreme content. Bonita did something of the kind.

"Have I hurt you?" inquired Thorn with fatuous concern, for the sound had certainly not resembled a groan.

"No-o. I guess I rather like it."

"My thinking of you that way?"

"M-hm,"—affirmatively.

"But you said just now—"

"Only that I didn't want *everybody* thinking of me that way." Thorn took a deep breath.

"Let me get this thing perfectly straight. Bonita—Miss Baring," he said huskily, "and I hope you will pardon my apparent slowness of comprehension. I understood you to say that your ideal girl would want only one man to love her. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"And this one must be the man she would be willing to love, in return?"

"Yes, Mr. Thorn."

"Therefore, since you are kind enough to—to permit me to think tenderly of you, may I infer that—that you, in turn, are actually willing to—to love me?"

"I think you—may infer it."

What Thorn said in response to this is unnecessary to record. His language was neither scientific nor lucid. Bonita's share in the conversation consisted mainly of monosyllabic noises, somewhat indicative of mirth. They sounded as though her mouth was stuffed with gingerbread, as perhaps, figuratively speaking, it was.

In the end Thorn decided, hazily, to telephone a cancellation of his railroad and steamer reservations and to notify his friends that he would not be able to join them on their jaunt to South America. This resolution was enthusiastically applauded by Bonita. It may even have been definitely foreseen, by so clear-visioned a young lady, from, let us say, the moment when she entered the tele-

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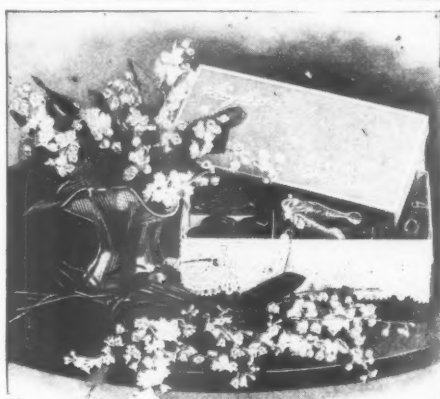
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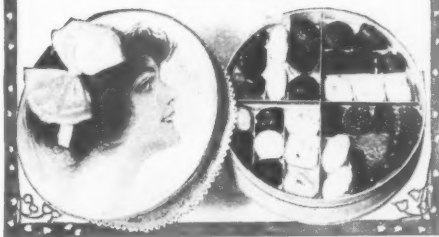
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His language was neither scientific nor lucid.

phone booth at the Lamartine Hotel; but in that case she apparently did not, as yet, consider the time ripe for confession. She told Thorn that he would find a telephone on a stand in the hall and promised solemnly that she would be sitting right there in the same spot, when he should return, five minutes later.

A ray of moonlight filtered through the vines and illuminated a patch of cocoa mat around her feet, discovering Thorn's "charm," now unheeded, since

he was not going away. He had dropped it, evidently in the excusable agitation of the previous minutes. Not many men have a proper regard for such tokens of sentiment, anyway.

Bonita picked up the violets and pressed them to her lips. Then, hearing her lover's step behind her, she slipped them into the front of her dress.

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If Martha had been there she would have known, of course, just where to put her hands on it. But Martha by this time was presumably half way across the Pacific Ocean, and one couldn't with any degree of decency shock a dignified and well-meaning elderly maiden aunt by shouting irritably over the banisters: "Now where the devil is my rain-coat?"

A gust of wind sent the raindrops against the window-panes still more sharply. Janvier pulled down two winter

overcoats, three suits of pajamas, and a suit of evening clothes. As he tossed them on the floor behind him a clock on the mantel chimed eight. He shouldn't have napped so long after dinner; he was overdue at the laboratory already, and hang this rain, and where on earth was that rain-coat? Four pairs of shoes, his last week's laundry still in its neat box, a bathrobe and two umbrellas flew out of the closet under his furious onslaught.

Then, suddenly inspired, Janvier arose from the closet floor, stepped out of the tobacco-smelling study and craned his neck over the banisters. He heaved a mighty sigh of relief. There in the hall below, hanging on the hat-rack, he caught sight of the missing rain-coat, just where he had left it three nights before. He stepped back to the study to snatch up one of the umbrellas and a

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little round gray cloth hat, and then sped down-stairs and fairly grabbed the rain-coat from its hook. A moment later he was out of the house, closing the door after him with such haste that the whole place quivered from roof-tree to sills.

Yes, plainly he was going to miss Martha. This never being able to find things when you wanted them was most irritating.

Just four weeks previous, the unexpected had happened. Theron Janvier's angular and forty-five-year-old sister Martha had been married. Martha was one of those last persons in the world you would have ever associated with matrimony. But there is no accounting for tastes; and when a flame of Martha's long distant youth had returned from Afghanistan or Lower Burma or the Fiji Islands or some other remote corner of the earth, with a red face, a large fortune and his affection for Martha still untrammelled, Martha had promptly declared herself his, even as she always had been his through all the intervening years. Followed a wedding, which Janvier had dutifully attended, not however, without reluctance, since it meant that he had to leave one of his most important classes at the university to an assistant; and now, Martha having installed the aforesaid elderly aunt to look after the household in general and Professor Janvier in particular, the happy couple were crossing the Pacific on a honeymoon trip around the world.

Oh, yes, Janvier could see very plainly now that he was going to miss Martha greatly. A trickle of cold water down the back of his neck gave his musings momentary pause. He was hurrying towards the university with the umbrella unopened and the rain-coat over his arm. He grunted. There you were! Martha would never have let him fare forth like that. She would have seen to it that the umbrella was over his head and the collar of the rain-coat snugly buttoned about his throat before ever he left the porch of the house. In fact, she would have been standing there at the door with the rain-coat, when he came down, to help him into it; and he would have slipped his arm about her as he left, perfunctorily it is true, and smacked her

soundly on the lips and said: "Good-by, dearie. I'll try to be back about half-past eleven."

Standing there in the rain under the swishing and dripping elms as he engineered the crumpled rain-coat over his already soaked clothes, Janvier felt very foolish and not a little lost. Plainly he would miss Martha very much indeed.

Janvier went to his laboratory at the university religiously every night at eight. You see, he was doing some very important work in biology, and what with interrupting classes and lectures in the daytime, night was the time to lose oneself in such important researches. The eyes of the scientific world had recently been turned quite a bit towards Farnham University, and it was this same Professor Theron Janvier and his biological researches which had turned them thither.

Also he had written a book—a very important and revolutionary work it would be—on "Certain Popular Misconceptions Concerning Radiolaria," and each evening while he bent with microscope or delicate weighing implements over porcelain basins filled with wriggling things in saline solution, Miss Linscott, the stenographer, in the little ante-room of the laboratory, clicked away at the typewriter copying the pages of that revolutionary work. It was very necessary that the work be accurately done—and it was full of impossible words in Janvier's all but illegible chirography.

Janvier had hesitated a long time before having a stenographer working in that ante-room while he was at his nightly researches in the laboratory; but when no less than ten public stenographers had glanced at the writing and the long words, listened to his re-iterated demands for accuracy, and shaken their respective heads very firmly, Janvier was glad to find a girl who would undertake the work, even if it did necessitate her doing the work in the ante-room, in order that she might be near enough for him to translate to her certain unreadable portions of the manuscript, and to spell for her some of those many-lettered words.

Janvier had occasion many times to thank his lucky stars that his stenog-



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rapher was as she was. Somehow she could come into the laboratory even in his most absorbed moments and ask for information without irritating him. Perhaps that was because her voice was low, with a certain musical quality, or because she stepped so softly, or because if he did not look up immediately she always waited unobtrusively and patiently behind one of the long, glass-topped benches. Anyway, she did not disturb him, and there Janvier let the matter drop, because that was all he asked of her. Even the click of the typewriter he had grown accustomed to. In fact, quite unconsciously, he had not only grown accustomed to the ticking, but he was beginning to like its neighborly sound in that little anteroom off the laboratory o' evenings. It really seemed to make it easier for him to concentrate on his researches.

He reached the university buildings, crossed the little campus and tore up two flights of stairs in the Proctor Memorial. He entered that ante-room of the laboratory looking more like a half-drowned rat than anything else. The round gray cloth hat sagged over his ears and dripped streams of water all over the floor, as did also the umbrella and the cuffs of his trousers-legs.

Miss Linscott had already arrived. The typewriter was clicking off merrily all the revolutionary things Professor Janvier had written about the popular misconceptions concerning radiolaria.

"I'm late," said he, sliding out of his rain-coat and his under-coat and donning his long white laboratory apron. "I couldn't find my rain-coat. Any trouble so far?"

"I couldn't make out this word," said Miss Linscott, lifting a page of the scrawled manuscript and tapping the word in question with her pencil.

"That?" said Janvier, wrinkling his brows and reading back a line or so to get the connection. "Oh, that is 'protoplasmatic'—p-r-o-t-o-p-l-a-s-m-a-t-i-c, you spell it. I couldn't find my rain-coat," he went on with almost childish peevishness in his tones. "My sister, who kept house for me, was married a month ago. I can't seem to keep things straight nor find anything since she's gone. She is

going around the world on her wedding-trip, too."

Before Miss Linscott could offer a word of sympathy, Janvier had stalked into the laboratory, but, through the half-open door leading thither, she could see him standing there before one of those glass-topped benches. There was an odd expression of childish petulance on his fine, ascetic features. Now and then he ran his hand through his thick hair, prematurely gray. It gave him a very distinguished look, Miss Linscott thought, that gray hair above those smooth, almost boyish cheeks. Janvier was only thirty-four. Miss Linscott watched him until she saw him, microscope to his eye, absorbed at one of the porcelain basins. Then quietly she arose. She had noticed the gloves sticking out of the rain-coat pocket. She had not overlooked a large rip in one of the fingers.

She whisked the gloves out of the pocket, drew a threaded needle from a little needle-case in the drawer of her table, and repaired that rip. As she was slipping the gloves back into the rain-coat pocket she could not help noticing had she tried—which she didn't—the dust on the collar and the shoulders of the coat hanging beside it. So she brushed the coat thoroughly and hung it back on its hook. She had been doing unobtrusive things like this for the past four weeks—blushingly at first, when she thought Janvier might notice them, but later, when she discovered he never dreamed how his gloves became mended or his coat brushed, she did it just the same, only now her blushes gave way to little sighs, accompanied by slow shakes of her pretty head.

Then she went back to her typing. That book she was doing had thoroughly convinced Miss Linscott that Professor Theron Janvier was the greatest savant of his time—or was it that prematurely gray hair above those boyish cheeks, the finely-cut features, the gentle, pathetic helplessness of the man that had done that convincing? Who can say? The ways of a maid.

At ten o'clock Miss Linscott stepped to the laboratory door. She had taken to herself the little task of announcing to Janvier every evening at ten that it was

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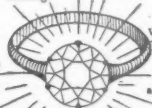
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JUST HABIT

time for him to cross the campus to the little all-night lunchroom for his two slices of toast and his cup of coffee. Janvier was particularly absorbed.

"It's ten o'clock, Professor Janvier," said she.

"Ten? Oh, yes. Of course. Thanks! Thanks very much, Miss Linscott," said he.

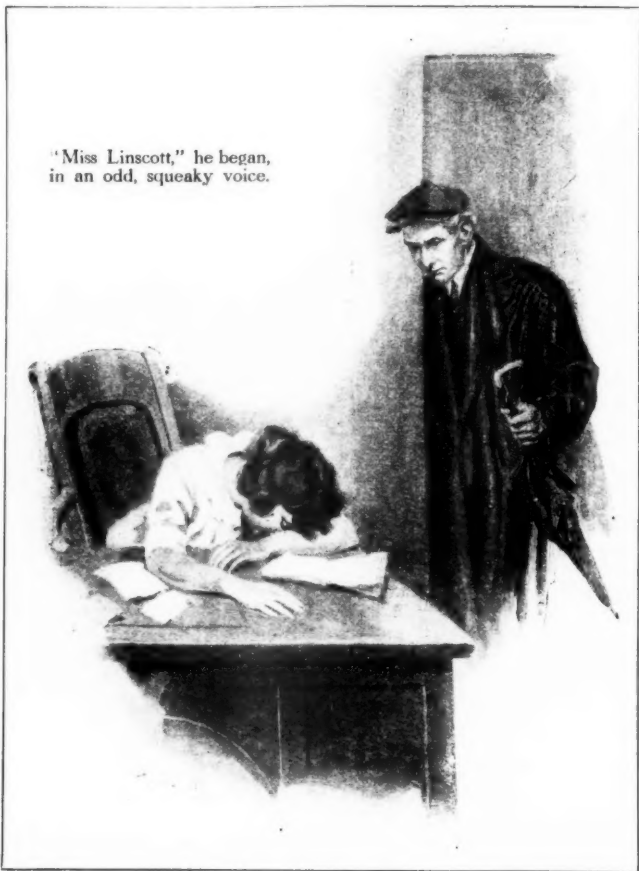
He straightened up from the bench and came out to the ante-room, pulling

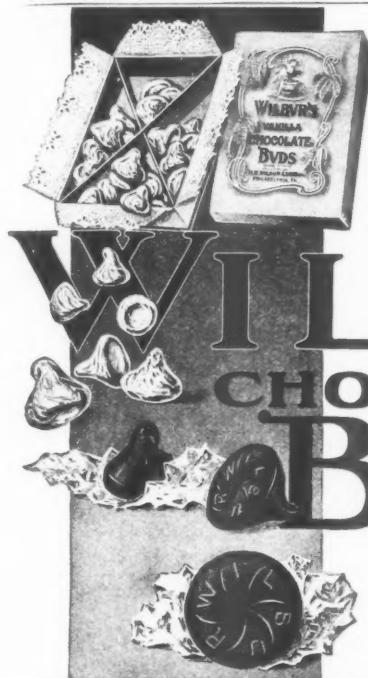
off the apron as he came. The rain flailed the windows with a hollow roar. He slipped into his coat and took down the round cloth hat. She saw his eyes had that far-away look in them that always meant an evening of much accomplishment for him.

He stepped to the hall door.

"But Professor Janvier," she remonstrated, "it's raining—hard. You'll need your umbrella."

"Miss Linscott," he began,
in an odd, squeaky voice.





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"Yes. Of course. Thank you!" said he absently, stepping to the corner for it.

"And your rain-coat too. Just listen to that rain," she declared as she took the coat from its hook and held it up for him.

Now Janvier's mind at that moment was undoubtedly filled with protozoa or amoebae or other engrossing things. But somewhere, sub-consciously, he was aware he was going through a familiar and a not unpleasant experience. Some one was helping him on with his coat; Martha had done that for him hundreds of evenings when he was starting out. And after she helped him on with his coat he always—

The coat was on. There was just that deft little tug at the tail of the under coat, just that deft little lifting of the collar of the outer coat that Martha always gave.

Janvier, still with that far-away look in his eyes and his mind busy with his recent work in the laboratory, swung about. His right arm coiled itself about Miss Linscott's shoulders. He drew her to him.

"Well, good-by, dearie," said he in those stereotyped, cheerful tones he had always used to Martha on such occasions. "I'll try to be back about half-past eleven."

Then he kissed Miss Linscott firmly and full upon her red lips.

Janvier's recollection of the next few minutes is vague to this day. He realized with the queer little smothered squeal—he took it for dismay and chagrin—from Miss Linscott, what he had done. Three thousand electric bolts stabbed through his body; one million quarts of blood surged to his cheeks and seemed trying to burst through the skin. Four hundred and fifty-six pounds of lead was suddenly hitched to the base of his tongue, drawing it far down his throat, so that when he tried to speak he made strange, frightened squeaks which sounded somewhat like those of a drowning man who is going under for the last time.

Every ounce of strength suddenly went out of his knees, and he felt that his spine had turned to a useless thing of pulp and water.

"I—I—say—I—" he began to gurggle. Then: "Oh, good Lord!" he groaned in fulsome despair, and turned and stumbled out of the room, bumping his nose against the door before he thoroughly had it opened, such was his haste, and getting his umbrella between his legs and all but upsetting himself. Altogether, Professor Theron Janvier at that moment was an object to inspire pity.

Lunch, of course, was out of the question. Who could consider even toast and coffee in the throes of such mental stress? He rushed down the stairs and out into the rain, his umbrella under his arm and his rain-coat flapping wide open, inviting the gusty rain to come in and soak him to the skin.

What had he done? *What* would Miss Linscott think of him? Suddenly he realized he cared a great deal about what Miss Linscott thought. He realized like a flash just why the sound of that typewriter in the ante-room didn't annoy him; also why, when she came into the laboratory to ask him questions, it didn't irritate him. Why, hang it, the girl was a beauty, a raving little beauty, with the finest eyes in the world, and the softest voice imaginable. And he had caught her in his arms—caught her in his arms and—merciful heavens!—*kissed her!* That's what he had done: Caught her in his arms—and *kissed her!*

She'd go now; of course she would. She was probably gone by now. And there'd be a halt in the typing of the book—but that was a secondary matter. How could he ever find her again, and if he did find her, how could he ever explain to her?

In his stress of mind he had pulled the gloves from his rain-coat pocket and was twisting them in his fingers. Then he started absently to put them on. As he did so, he remembered suddenly, and curiously enough, the big rip in the forefinger of the right glove. He was pulling on the right glove, and there was no rip there. Once there had been a button off his coat. He had meant to ask his aunt to sew it on. He remembered now that he had not asked her, but that button had been sewed on. He put two and two together. He wanted to hope things he dared not.



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"Here comes one I'm not going to apologize for."

Then all at once he turned about and went resolutely back towards the laboratory. But by the time he was mounting the stairs his steps were those of a man bound to his own execution. At the top he paused. No click from the typewriter. Of course not. She was gone. His heart action lowered several very perceptible beats. He opened the ante-room door, breathing hard.

There at her little typewriter table sat Miss Linscott. Her head was lowered. She did not look up as he stepped in. He fancied she must be able to hear the *throb-throb* of his heart against his ribs.

He took a long breath. One would have thought he was about to dive into either ice water or boiling oil.

"Miss Linscott," he began in an odd, squeaky voice, leaning weakly against

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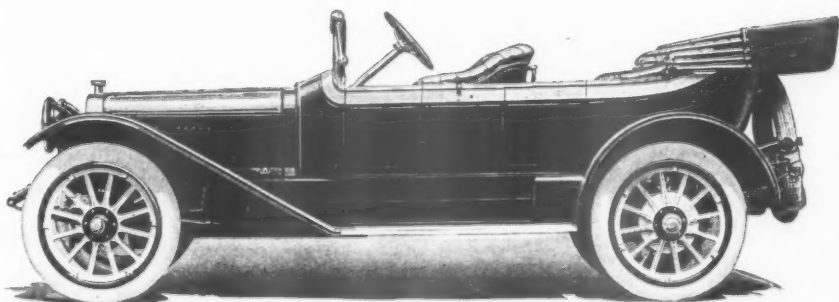
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the door, while the water dripped in pools from his rain-soaked clothes, "about—er—about what—er—happened when I—er—left. I wish to explain. I—er—want you to understand. I—I—you've heard me speak of my sister, Martha, who kept house for me. She—er—she—er—that is, I'm a trifle erratic when my mind is on my work. She—er—used to look after me—in little things; see that I had on an overcoat when it was cold and rubbers when it rained, and—and—things like that. She used to help me on with my coat—and—and when she did I always—er—er—er—kissed her.

"I—no one has helped me on with my coat of late; so to-night, when you did, I—er—you see my mind was back there on what I'd been doing in the laboratory. That's why I kis—er—er—that's why I acted in the reprehensible and totally unwarranted manner I did. I want to apologize most sincerely. I—er—really, I hope—that is to say—I hope I've made you understand."

His voice was unsteady; it had the pleading quality of some very little child's begging for mercy. He looked as if he might sink to the floor at any minute.

Miss Linscott lifted her head. Her cheeks were flushed, but he could not understand that look in her eyes—a

strange, troubled light; misty they were, too, as if they were about to overflow. He took an agonized grip on the umbrella handle.

"You don't believe me," he choked. "You think it's just a cock and bull yarn that I've thought up since I left here. You think—"

"Professor Janvier," she said very softly but very steadily, "you are quite mistaken. I—I—"

Suddenly the misty eyes overflowed. Down went her head to the crook of her arm on one corner of the table.

"I—didn't—*want* you to apologize," came her stifled voice. Janvier's umbrella went clattering to the floor. Off came the rain-coat to be flung aside in a crumpled heap; off came his under-coat likewise. Fortunately, just as he was clutching at his vest he realized what he was doing and stopped there. With an inarticulate whoop he was across the room; he was bending over her; he was lifting her in his arms; he was holding her close.

"Well," fairly shouted the exuberant Janvier, "here comes one I'm not going to apologize for."

The precious manuscript of that revolutionary book fluttered off the table and crumpled and crinkled beneath their feet. But there are times when popular fallacies concerning radiolaria are of very slight importance.

"Just Habit" isn't at all the sort of story Red Book readers have been led to expect from Thomas Gray Fessenden. Generally he gives them stories of big dramatic action. But if you like "Just Habit" as well as we did, it will only stimulate your appetite for his next story of a "Smoke Eater." It is called and you may look for it in the February Red Book. "The Pull"